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SAURUS

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

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CHAPTER I

Professor Felix Toddleben was a reasonable man, which is to say that he accepted facts often repellent to human instinct. While granting that our senses alone permit us to know anything at all, since they represent the sole channels through which knowledge may be attained, he yet acknowledged the scientific truth that they are not constituted ever to attain reality. He resented sham solutions to the riddle of existence and denied that the true one lay within reach of finite intelligence.

"Man," said Felix, "must bow to his mental limitations and admit the Absolute to be for ever beyond him." He held biology the most exciting occupation and wished that he were young again to concentrate upon it. For him the Victorian universe was a fiction of the past—its dogmas and certainties as dead as the dodo—but he recognized no considerable genius at present carrying on the good work, or tilling the fruitful field.

The professor's own activities concerned only a small corner of zoology, wherein he stood the admitted master of human knowledge; but he was quite aware of its comparative unimportance, had never possessed the professorial mind and always laughed at those numerous savants who flourish their little crumb of wisdom and cry 'Behold the loaf!'

He knew far more about *Lacerta* than anybody else in the world; but he was also assured that profounder problems than any offered by the Lizard family still await discovery.

The excellent man had achieved such distinction as he most coveted and was a Fellow of the Royal Society. His classic on his subject stood as yet unchallenged, and now, at sixty-five years old, he pursued his way and continued to devote his working hours to the *Lacerta*, while enjoying increased leisure for pursuit of biology and modern physics, which he approached as an amateur. He corresponded with learned societies, but was not himself gregarious and lacked any flair for social friendships. In his dry fashion he would remark that to be a mammal proved distressing enough without herding among others. For the most part he found the life of his unconscious fellow creatures more attractive and stimulating than that of his own species, yet, while somewhat unapproachable socially, the professor was generous to humane causes and quick to lessen adversity when it lay in his power so to do.

Absolute independence of thought he demanded as a man of science, and perceiving his native country to be the most free and least under dictatorial regime, was glad that he happened to be an Englishman. For the scientific mind needs liberty and can ill brook the dictation and lordship of intellects inferior to its own. He held that science had proved its right to freedom by every page of its noble history, and the spectacle of a backward people casting out Einstein, with attendant circumstances of robbery, for ever stamped their nation, in his opinion, as a danger to human progress and an insult to civilization.

"That the man who discovered Relativity—the most world-shaking doctrine since Evolution—should be subjected to the assault and outrage of Nordic Huns, is as though we had driven a Newton or a Darwin from our eternal reverence and devotion"—so Felix would declare.

His connection with a State Department was concluded by age limit, and at the same time he vacated a university chair and retired to the peace and quiet of the country. Chance had left him a small estate and dwelling-house in East Devon and, at Applewood, he now dwelt in retirement, his mind ceaselessly active, his health preserved by exercise and the pursuit of horticulture. Most of his forty acres was meadowland and let to a farmer; but the professor enjoyed the beauty of his orchard in daffodil time, in blossom time and in fruit time. He also reserved to himself a two-acre paddock, his walled vegetable and fruit garden and the domain of lawns and flowers. In his hot-houses he grew exotic things and found relaxation and genuine joy of life in their culture. He also hatched the eggs of the *Lacerta* and learned new facts concerning them. He was very seldom outside his own outer gate, but always busy and active in mind and body within it. His annual exodus and holiday took him to the meeting of the British Association, where he renewed acquaintance with his kind and enjoyed the reputation of a man of humour. Humour is a relative term and, in truth, the professor's vintage must have seemed exceeding dry to any average lover of a joke; but he entertained the learned, and an irreverent post-war generation called him 'The Lizard' behind his back. These youthful zoologists pretended to perceive in Toddleben's active gestures, bright eyes and attenuated physique kinship with the creatures to whom he had dedicated his life. And now this distinguished man stood upon the brink of extraordinary events tending to prove an interposition of Providence. An astounding coincidence was at hand and the professor, who judged that life had already blessed him with all the experience he desired, was shortly about to face a challenge destined to represent the whole of his busy and learned past

as a mere preliminary to events unique, not only in his own existence, but that of all human kind.

Felix was unmarried, for love had never rippled the deep stream of his devotion to learning; but he possessed a widowed sister who adored him and she, after a stormy union with a soldier, returned to her brother when Major Hapgood lost his life in a motor accident. Norah had now kept his house for twenty years. She was younger than he and, save for one daughter, lacked all encumbrances. Mrs. Hapgood possessed that element of humour which petered out so faintly in Felix. She was easy-going, comfortable and never perturbed by circumstance—a woman well calculated to support him in the tremendous event now so near at hand. She cared much for her brother, devoted her care to his comfort and took quite an intelligent interest in his pursuits, read scientific books with pleasure and often pleased him by her understanding of the major problems demanding elucidation.

"What we want now," said Norah, "is a new portrait of Man. The finished picture depicted by a Darwin and a Huxley has grown faint. The biologists of the coming generation must wipe it out and give us something more in keeping with the immense strides that science has taken since their time."

Norah had stolen this opinion from a book, as she stole many of her opinions; but the professor, not having as yet read the book, felt gratification at her sound sense. She knew well how to please him.

"You almost tempt me sometimes to subscribe to the doctrine of 'intuition', my love," he said after one of her plagiarisms. "One knows, of course, that the idea of intuition has been exploded, yet your hazardous shots at truth not seldom hit the mark."

On one occasion he caught Norah, but she escaped the snare and created no suspicion. She had stated opinions gleaned from her reading and Felix stared at her with amazement.

"Good powers, woman!" he exclaimed, "Owen said that fifty years ago!"

"Then," she replied, "if I agree with Owen after such a lapse of time, it is certain that we must both be right."

It was their custom to reserve any item of special interest gleaned through the day until they sat together after the evening meal in Norah's drawing-room. Then, if her brother had anything of particular importance to relate, she would hear it, and should the day have brought some local news, Norah had the racy item ready.

There came a summer evening when it was the professor's turn, and as they drank their coffee together in his sister's unobtrusive but attractive apartment, Felix pricked the end of his after-dinner cigar, but spoke before he lighted it.

"You'll be glad to hear that I have completed my monograph on the second sub-order of the Chamæleonoidea—genera Chamæleon and Rhampholeon. I wrote the last word this morning," he said quietly.

Whereupon Norah set down her cup, leapt up and kissed him.

"Well done, darling!" she cried. "A triumph!"

"Adequate, I hope."

"You'll miss it fearfully; but you must take a little real rest now."

The professor was suffering from that consciousness that comes to the creative artist on completion of any achievement. He scarcely knew it himself as yet, but it tinged his mind to a certain melancholy, which presently found voice.

He seldom criticized himself, and when he did so, Norah always diagnosed liver; but to-night, rather than any exhibition of modest jubilation on the completion of his work, Felix showed personal dissatisfaction—not with the monograph, but himself.

He turned upon his cigar and regarded it with unfriendly eyes.

"It has troubled me of late," he said, "that I grow very self-indulgent. There is a fatal weakness in our natures to be tender to ourselves, and we find that few consciences are powerful enough to combat this propensity. Of late my evening cigar has caused me discomfort—not physical, needless to say, for I win absurd animal pleasure from it—but mentally, even morally. I smoke three hundred and sixty-five cigars every year of my life and have done so for many years. The

brand is not expensive for a sound and matured Havannah, but the fact remains that I spend somewhat more than fifteen pounds of good money every year on a gross, personal luxury."

"Now listen to me," began Norah; but he stopped her.

"Allow me to finish, please, then, I think, you will find nothing to say in response," he replied. "Now a luxury must be approached with caution and weighed in the balance. We should consider its dangers and measure them against its advantages. What, at first sight, appears perhaps utterly harmless, may possess insidious properties of a dangerous nature. Luxury may be unsocial and therefore basically immoral. While doing you no apparent harm, it is possible that by prejudicing your powers to do other people good, it is working real, though unsuspected, havoc with your own morale. I see many sound reasons in the case of my neighbours why modest luxuries are right and just. For those less blessed than myself I often delight to observe how some happy accident has added pleasure to their days and perhaps helped to lessen the burdens that life has put upon them. But consider my own immense advantage over such persons. I already have a luxury denied to most people at my time of life. I have passed the grand climacteric without an ache or pain. I have known no physical disability since I cut my teeth. In a word, Providence has blessed me with that rare and super-luxury, perfect health: a sound mind housed in a sound body. Better than wealth, better than intellect, surely better than cigars, is the parental legacy of such a constitution as both you and I enjoy.

"Granted then," concluded the professor, "that from no virtue of my own I am privileged to possess the greatest luxury that any man of good sense can desire—a luxury far above the merit and beyond the unaided reach of humanity—then does it not follow that, content with such a supreme blessing, I should scorn all lesser luxuries whatsoever, and devote my means rather to finding how I may abate the necessities of those less fortunate?"

"If you have finished with this nonsense, perhaps you will permit me to speak, darling," answered Norah. She was calm but her eyes flashed upon him.

"I have but one thing to say," she continued, "and you have long since learned that what I say, I mean. I am not going to argue and I am not going to be sentimental. I merely state, as a matter of adamant fact beyond any appeal whatsoever, that if you give up your after-dinner cigar, I leave the house. Light it at once and talk of something else. Humility of this kind is quite unworthy of you and most distasteful to me. We may not be altruists exactly, but we do all the good we can. We are most kind-hearted and patient. I attend the baby clinics and mothers' meetings. You give prizes for the whist drives and athletic sports and flower shows. Nobody bearing a horrid little book ever brings it to this door without receiving a subscription. You make no distinction as to the cause. Everything and everybody gets a half-crown from the pile that you keep upon your desk for the purpose. Your indifference and lack of discrimination is quite unmoral. You give food and drink to anybody who comes begging. You do all manner of irrational things from your good heart. So do I. There is not a pin to choose between us. I might as well say that I shall give up my aviary of budgerigars and tropical finches, as you suggest denying yourself this innocent and aromatic pleasure. I will not give up my budgeys for anybody, and you will not give up your tobacco. I should miss it quite as much as you would. Now talk of something else."

Felix smiled and struck a match.

"We are a gross couple; but it shall be as you wish, my love," he answered.

When agitated Norah would sometimes talk to herself, and she did so now.

"If the greatest living authority on the Lacerta cannot smoke an occasional cigar, then the universe may run down, and the sooner the better," she murmured, frowning at her bosom.

Silence fell for a few moments, then the professor put a question.

"When does Mildred honour us with a visit?" he asked.

Mildred Hapgood worked in London as a clerk at the War Office, where she prospered on light labours, easy hours, excellent money and ample leisure. She enjoyed life heartily and was a typical maiden of the times, with great gift of friendship and love of all things new. She was fearless and education had armed her against harm, so that while she enjoyed fancied perils and liked to believe that she lived dangerously, the fact was otherwise. None could take better care of herself than Mildred, and the reckless strain won from her father was moderated by an element of intelligence peculiar to herself. She and her mother were good friends but entertained no particular admiration for each other, and

while her uncle enjoyed her breezy companionship, beauty and youth, he was prone to regret her pleasures and opinions. For Mildred's part she found him inexpressibly arid. "You are not merely a lizard, but a fossil lizard, Uncle Felix," she once told him when he opposed her theory of existence, "and it is exasperating, because I really believe about things in general pretty much what you do yourself. Only I have the wit to see that everything is going to be all right in a few million years, when man has grown up, whereas you are cowardly enough to think that everything is all wrong with him and feel sure that he will never live to grow up at all."

Mrs. Hapgood answered her brother's question.

"Milly is going to Norway with friends for her vacation; but hopes to look us up before she returns to work," she said. "We bore her. There is a hectic demand for eternal incident in Milly, common of course to her generation, dear child. An instinct prompts her to avoid both us and Applewood, and she summed it up last time she was here. 'Nothing ever happens,' she told me, 'and that's so ageing.'"

"But there lies the beauty of life as we plan it," argued the professor. "The less extraneous incident and the fewer complications, the more time and peace for those happenings of only real moment, which take place within the ambit of our own brains. Most people, by their ill-considered actions, leave the door open to every sort of undesirable happening that it is possible to imagine, and then they cry out with dismay at the passage of events, which might have been avoided with a little intelligent anticipation. Was it unworthy to be called a happening that to-day I finished my monograph?"

"Of course not. It's the most tremendous thing that has happened at Applewood since you finished the last one—three years ago," she replied. "You and I and the scientific world know that perfectly well. But Mildred is only twenty-three. Which really sums up the situation. At three-and-twenty the young want things to happen and love to be in a continual whirl. They welcome change, just as your Great Dane welcomes the start of a walk. As he dashes forth, bursting with idiot joy about nothing, giving tongue for the mere delight of being alive and able to smell the million scents that salute his delicate nostrils, and are mercifully hidden from ours, so the young dash forth to salute their companions and rejoice in every sort of distraction, that a distracted world so abundantly offers them. We cannot judge their excitement or share their fiendish energy. We mature blossoms quite forget what it felt like to open our hearts to the sun and rain for the first time."

"True, Norah. I see your point. When Milly specifies her next date of arrival, we will be alert to arrange something in the nature of an entertainment for her," promised Felix.

"What its nature may be," he continued, "does not occur very readily to my mind; but I can trust yours to plan a carouse, or expedition, or what not, and ask such of her generation as we know to join us."

"It's not a bit easy really to entertain a town girl in the heart of a rural district," admitted Norah. "Even the bright ones fail to catch the spirit of it, or appreciate the orderly sights and scenes presented to them. They care nothing for the crops and herds, yet appear amazingly sensitive to weather. They indicate instant depression if a soaking day confronts them. Mildred always evinces a quiet but obvious determination to do her duty when she arrives, and a sparkling excitement when the day of departure dawns and she departs, rejoicing in the conviction that she has done it."

"She loves art," commented the professor, "but is singularly indifferent to the sources from which art springs. I have heard her say that she would infinitely sooner see a Turner sunrise in the comfort of a picture gallery, than get up before dawn and behold the phenomena for herself. 'In a fine Corot,' she said to me on one occasion, 'you get everything you want without going to some horrid, marshy hole full of midges and mud, where he went to paint it. He had to face these things for his art; but there is no occasion, though we adore him, for us to face them. He gives us all the loveliness and colour and mystery without the mess and mosquitoes. One of the beautiful things about art is that'—well you know how she talks."

"Quite sensibly according to her lights, which burn from new lamps," replied Norah; "and, by the same token, our lamps need new wicks. They shall be got when I visit the city on Thursday. For the moment I am going to bed after listening to the news."

Mrs. Hapgood started the radio which occupied a corner of her drawing-room. Neither ever listened to it until nine o'clock, save on the occasions of a symphony concert, but both enjoyed music.

The affairs of civilization proved not very cheerful on this occasion, and when the record ended, Norah kissed her

brother and retired, while he went to his study, where he was used to read and drink a glass of hot water, his final refreshment for the day.

At midnight, or there about, the professor usually liberated 'Rex', his Great Dane, leaving the house, yard and outbuildings to his care. Then he went to bed and the dreamless sleep he was accustomed to enjoy.

But to-night the unusual happened and, about the hour of two, Felix found himself wide awake and in some concern to know what had shattered his unconsciousness. He judged rightly that only a considerable sound would have been capable of doing so; but as he rose and turned on his electric lamp no noise broke the nightly silence. Faint and at some distance from the house, he presently heard the baying of his Great Dane, but it was not an utterance calculated to banish sleep, or bring him thus suddenly wide awake and aware of some untoward event.

A sense of incidents altogether out of the common prevented Felix from putting out his light and going to sleep again, and he was sitting up considering the possibility of action when there came a knock at his door. Voices had already attracted his attention and he had heard his sister and a manservant upon the landing. Now she came in and displayed much perturbation.

"Everybody in the house is awake," declared Norah, "and something tremendous has evidently happened out of doors."

She was clad in a dark-green silk dressing-gown, and wore a cap upon her grey hair.

"Sit down and tell me what you know," he answered. "The tremendous thing that has happened to me is that I was suddenly startled from sleep at two of the clock; but what occasioned any event so unusual I have yet to learn."

"It sounded exactly as though an express train had broken loose and was whirling through the rhododendrons under my bedroom window," explained Norah. "The air was full of a sudden roar and the house rocked. I thought every moment that the roof would crash down upon us."

"Then the vibration doubtless woke me," answered Felix.

"It lasted no time," she continued. "Just one pandemonium, like a hideous explosion with everything shaking, and then all was quiet. So it wasn't a storm or anything of that sort."

"It may have been an explosion," he declared.

"What have we got to explode?" she asked.

"My thoughts turn to the heating apparatus in the incubating-house. Anything wrong there would be very serious, for I have some exceedingly rare plants being cultivated for my friend, Sir Humphrey Johnson, the Director of Kew. But no lizards at present."

The professor prepared to rise.

"I must investigate," he said. "If Peters is outside, direct him to go to the lodge, summon Medland and tell him to join me at the stove-houses in the kitchen garden."

"Peters is on the landing, in purple pyjamas with a broad yellow stripe," answered Norah. "He is trembling and quite unnerved and looking like nothing on earth."

But Felix preserved absolute calm.

"Tell him to put on some clothes at once and not attempt to go to the lodge attired in that grotesque fashion," he directed. "If the Great Dane met him in purple pyjamas he would not be recognized and have swift cause to regret it. Now go away and I will attire myself and investigate."

His sister was about to leave him when he spoke again.

"Mildred will be interested to learn that something has happened at last," he said.

A quarter of an hour later the professor descended to the hall, put on a cap and a pair of goloshes, procured an electric torch from a drawer in a Welsh dresser and set forth.

He met Peters returning from the lodge. His trepidation had passed and the factotum was brave again.

"I've roused the gardener, sir," he said. "He'll be on his way. He was woke by the affair and a good bit put about."

"Can you form any theory to account for it?" asked Felix and the old man declared that he stood in doubt between two opinions.

"'Tis one thing, or else another, without a doubt, Professor," he replied. "Either a thunder-planet have fallen on Applewood, or else 'tis they Germans. There can't be nought else."

"If by 'thunder-planet' you mean an aerolite, or fragment from the outer universe, I should feel disposed to agree with you," answered Felix. "But not, I think, an enemy bomb. Nothing is hidden more profoundly from common knowledge than the truth of the political situation at any time; but there is no reason, if we may trust the news, to presume an evil of that kind."

"So long as you ain't afeared, I ain't afeared, Professor," declared Peters.

"Go in now and direct a maid to brew tea and take a cup to Mrs. Hapgood. Let the staff prepare what stimulant they feel to need, and take a tot of brandy yourself. If the stove is intact, I shall return very shortly."

"The dog sounds to be yowling down in the paddock, Professor."

"I will look to him before I come in. Any possible catastrophe there would be of minor importance."

The July night was moonless, but summer stars shone drowsily overhead and the air smelled sweet as Toddleben turned on his torch and set forth to learn the worst. A range of low hills extended northerly of Applewood and behind them already glimmered the dawn of another day.

CHAPTER II

Passing by familiar ways and through familiar doors Felix soon reached the theatre of his anxieties, to find his precious plant-houses at peace. A light shone as he reached them, for the gardener was already there.

Saul Medland had been taken over with Applewood. He was part and parcel of the place, and as boy and man, had worked upon it for half a century. The arrival of the new tenant proved a tonic and a challenge to Saul, but he survived the test and rejoiced with native wits to move in a higher horticultural sphere after nearly half a century of modest and conventional toil. He always hated the lizards, but the hot-houses, the rare plants and intensive culture, that had crushed a lesser man, fired Medland with enthusiasm, and his application gratified the master. They were become close friends.

"I've caught the slug red-'anded, Professor," shouted the old man as Felix entered. "You was right, as you always are; and if I'd 'a' sat up for him all night a bit ago, no doubt I'd have took him sooner."

"Out of evil cometh good, then," replied Felix. "I am glad you captured him, Saul. Is everything as it should be? I detect no disturbance."

"All's well, master, so far as I've travelled round about. But something a good bit out of the common overtook the neighbourhood at two o'clock. A proper rumpus and a crash to wake the dead. I was awake at the time cussing they baggering owlets, as you won't let me shoot, that bawl in the ilex. And just when the clock struck two—on the nail, you may say—there came the fearful affair. My wife sleeps like the dead, but it woke her, though never was thunder loosed that could do it. 'Did I hear anything, Saul?' she asked me. 'So like as not you heard the Day of Doom, woman,' I said. But all was quiet again and she went to sleep instanter."

"That's another theory," answered Felix. "Peters had two—one quite reasonable. He suspects a 'thunder-planet', by which he means what used to be called a thunder-stone, or aerolite."

"Well, it haven't fallen on the stove whether or no, though in a manner of speaking it have fallen on the slug, thanks be," replied Medland.

No evidence of anything unusual marked the night, but still 'Rex' bellowed from the paddock and together the two old men presently turned their steps there. In the corner of the field stood a linhay and the professor approached it.

"We will see if the mare can tell us anything," he said, and Saul made no comment, for in his experience the professor often proved potent to glean information from unexpected sources.

The linhay was only secured by a half-hatch gate and over this an ancient horse stood peering into the darkness. They spoke comfortable words and the creature neighed in evident thankfulness to hear a familiar voice. Her eyes were full of fear and she was trembling still at the recent experience.

"She's sweating like a pig," said Saul. "Poor old girl's had the shock of her life, I shouldn't wonder."

'Sally' contributed her aid to the conduct of Applewood. She mowed the lawns, took the washing to the laundress or went to the railway station when a package was reported. After any toil of this kind she would lie down in the paddock and indicate utter exhaustion; but though now nineteen years of age, her constitution was sound, her teeth satisfactory and her appetite good.

'Sally', restored to peace by evidence that all was still right with her world, retired into her linhay, but 'Rex' still gave tongue and indicated some disturbing discoveries. The men proceeded therefore and presently observed him galloping in much concern while he bayed for attention. At the sound of his master's whistle he approached and gave evidence that he had news to impart could he but do so.

"The air is unsettled here," said Felix. "There has been some commotion, but as yet I see no reason for it."

'Rex' ran before and they followed him to a remarkable upheaval. Fifty yards from the bottom of the paddock the atmosphere became perceptibly warmer, and suddenly they perceived that the meadow grass was broken and a considerable pit yawned from the middle of it. No great elevation of earth marked the fracture but considerable heat appeared to have been engendered and the gulf created was clearly of no small depth.

"Watch your step, Professor, and don't fall in," urged Medland.

Then they stood together on the brink of a well-like hole from which warm air arose. The aperture was not wide but of circular formation with a diameter of two and a half yards. The depth appeared to be twenty feet, or possibly somewhat more.

"How do it strike you, Professor?" asked Medland after a silent perambulation of the gulf.

"I am exceedingly thankful that it did not strike me, or anybody else," answered Felix. "The impact was terrific and had this foreign body smote any habitation or living thing it is easy to have seen what must have happened."

"You'd judge there was a foreign body down there then, master?"

"Without a doubt, Saul. Some fairly massive object, travelling at tremendous speed, came literally to earth in my paddock. More than that I am not prepared to assert, save that the object is now buried in the ground at the bottom of this excavation. To-morrow we shall begin our survey of the event, and learn as much as our wits will tell us. Don't let 'Sally' out in the morning until I join you after breakfast. We must proceed with scientific caution and do nothing in haste that would stultify us afterwards. Now we will both get back to our beds, my dear fellow."

Ten minutes later Felix had returned to the house and found Norah sitting in her apartment drinking tea. She poured out a cup for him.

"I told them to bring a second cup on your account," she said, "and you must ease my mind, otherwise I shall not sleep again. Hide nothing from me, Felix. If the budgey house is destroyed, let me know the worst."

"The budgey house stands where it did, and nothing has been destroyed save a small patch of sward in the paddock. There an exceptional and somewhat puzzling event confronts me. I have pondered over it since leaving the spot and failed to find any explanation as yet. Shall I tell you now, or leave details and possibilities until to-morrow?"

"Now," answered Norah.

"Briefly then, some extraneous body, of no very great size I am glad to say, has fallen—from the sky apparently—into our paddock."

"'Sally' is safe?"

"Quite safe; but she was much distressed and thankful to see Medland and myself. The incident occurred within two hundred yards of her and doubtless she never heard such a tremendous sound in her life before. But we set her at rest. Now, on the face of it, one must judge that an aerolite has fallen and it may be so. There is nothing to prevent one of these aerial messengers from alighting in Devonshire, or anywhere else, and but for our atmosphere, which acts as a protection and armour against all of them, save the very largest, we should be subject to ceaseless bombardment from these flying fragments. But as a rule they are of modest size and, on reaching our envelope of air, the friction they endure at their immense speed burns them up: hence the phenomenon of so-called shooting-stars with which you are familiar. The visitants once captured by earth's gravitation are doomed, and only their incinerated dust falls harmlessly upon us."

"A blessing, no doubt," said Norah.

"A very great blessing; but from time to time some massive monster is not burned up and succeeds in reaching our planet in a state of partial incandescence, but with enough of its substance preserved to render it formidable and terrible. There is in my knowledge no recorded history of any great disaster to civilization from such a cause, but it is well known that in the lone steppes of Russia such a huge meteor fell; and this brings me to the point.

"I do not know whether the scene of that impact has been adequately and scientifically explored and the nature of the fallen mass completely determined; but I am familiar with the fact that a scene of extreme desolation and ruin was created by the fall of this semi-molten meteor, and a desert made where until that time forestal land existed. Every living thing was destroyed by the furious fires that burst into being and the earth was cast up from the very bowels of the region and torn out, where the great stone fell. A crater was formed of vast depth, and the surface of the land altered with the radius of a mile or more."

"Never mind about that," begged Norah. "Anything might happen in Russia, and if this object had waited for Mr. Stalin,

then a good many other much pleasanter Russians might still be alive who are so no longer. I am the last to criticize Providence in any case."

"The Hand of Providence must be acknowledged so far as you and I are concerned," declared Felix, "because had the bolt, now buried out of doors, fallen upon our dwelling, little of consequence would have been likely to remain. Even the monograph might have gone. But let me proceed and explain the problem. I mentioned this great Russian aerolith to show you how it treated the region upon which it fell; but our visitor has acted quite differently. Happily it was of far smaller bulk in any case, and the evidence, as far as I have yet been able to judge, points to quite another sort of object. There is no ragged and disorderly confusion in the paddock such as a flaming and falling rock of great size must have occasioned. The herbage is not burned. Not a spark of fire attended the avalanche. And yet, in order to escape our atmosphere, the thing must have been of very considerable size and could hardly have failed to be at a high temperature."

"Do tell me what you found, Felix. That is all that interests me."

"I found a perfectly symmetrical hole drilled into the earth—such a hole as men make when they are sinking for a well. It is circular and some twenty feet deep as far as I could judge by the ray of my electric torch. The bottom is filled with earth and the fallen visitant lies doubtless buried beneath that earth. A perceptibly warmer air rose from the pit than the cool atmosphere of the night; but there was nothing offensive or oppressive about it. One smelled only the sweet savour of upturned soil.

"Now," continued the professor, "you will be anxious to learn my deductions, and I warn you, Norah, that they are of a startling nature. A lifetime devoted to the search for truth has denied me those qualities of poetry and imagination I so greatly admire in other people; but here the apparent truth would seem to plunge me directly into the realms of imagination—quite the last thing that one of my status and scientific position would desire or proclaim. I will ask you, therefore, to keep what I am about to say strictly to yourself. Nothing would be more unseemly than that the opinion I am about to utter should attain publicity until supported by data as yet to be discovered. I may be wrong. I could almost find it in my heart to hope that I am. Yet that were perhaps cowardly and, in any case, I shall not flinch from the labours now confronting me."

"Of course you won't," said Norah, "but why make such a fuss about it and meet trouble half-way? You can get those two young men—the Fords—who dug so well when they turned Stormbury Camp into a ruin hunting for Roman remains. They only found some buttons and a sardine tin as far as I remember; but it was agreed by everybody that the Romans had not eaten sardines when in Devonshire. Well, you dig up this stone and read a paper on it and send it to Redchester Museum, and there's an end of the matter."

"The point is, my love, that I am not going to dig up a stone. A semi-red-hot stone would have acted altogether differently. Now, permit me to elaborate my reflections. This circular hole can only have been created by a circular object, and, arrived at that conclusion, I ask myself what object of this precise description could be responsible. A suggestion immediately occurred from the Great War, and for a moment it seemed to fit the case. You will remember during that tragedy how the Germans invented a prodigious cannon which went by the name of 'Big Bertha' and fired projectiles upon Paris from a range of many miles. Here, then, appeared an explanation apparently calculated to meet the facts. From somewhere in Europe a vast bullet had been launched in the direction of England and come to earth in East Devon within our narrow boundaries."

"Why?" asked Norah.

"It is idle to ask 'why' nowadays for much that happens," he answered, "and we may yet live to face many surprises beyond our powers of explanation; but I am glad to say that certain facts speedily came to my mind exonerating Europe from any outrage of this description. No, the Continent is not involved—a satisfactory conclusion so far as it goes—but opening the way to a hypothesis infinitely more tremendous."

"You're not going to tell me that this cannon-ball came from Ireland?" asked Norah.

"Certainly not. I am going to tell you that it didn't come from any terrestrial source whatsoever. And that conclusion is irrefutably written in the hole in the paddock."

"Why assume anything so utterly mad? That is not like you, Felix," said Norah.

"I began with an assumption, but I end with a certainty," he replied. "The trained scientific mind is ever cautious and incapable of taking a step unsupported by facts. Now, the fact that our gate-crashing, uninvited visitor is not of human origin can be made quite clear to you, my love. To return to 'Big Bertha', or any similar or monstrous piece of ordnance, we have to consider the manner in which it is fired. The barrel of the weapon extends from the breech, and if that barrel were set at right angles to the earth's surface, the projectile must go straight up into the air and presently return to the ground near the scene of the discharge. Circumstances might tend slightly to deflect it, but we may safely assume it would come back perpendicularly to earth within fairly close proximity to the spot from which it started. Behaving in this fashion, it would without doubt create just such a cavity as now yawns in our paddock. But not so was 'Big Bertha' exploded. It was aimed in the direction of France and designed to strike Paris from a distance of some fifty miles or more. Thus the missile started at an angle with the horizon, not at right angles to it, and soared upon its dreadful way, attaining at the zenith of its trajectory a height of some thirty miles above earth's surface. Then, its range completed and its journey done, it falls at a greater angle than it started from the cannon. Had this happened, a totally different scene must have confronted me, and the paddock, instead of being neatly bored, must have been ripped and torn—possibly from one hedge to the other. Thus we may deduce that the projectile fell perpendicularly, or at right angles to earth's surface; and that being so, it can only have come from elsewhere."

"Probably from the moon," suggested Norah; "but I thought it was generally understood no life existed on the moon."

"As to its point of departure we can say nothing as yet," he answered. "I am no astronomer, but Greenwich will work out the figures we are in a position to furnish. All we know is that the object fell at two o'clock by summer time, and how far that will offer a sound starting-place for their calculations, I cannot tell."

"On second thoughts, as there is no moon just now, perhaps that rules it out," suggested Mrs. Hapgood; but the professor could offer no suggestions.

"The projectile, or missile, may itself help future investigation," he answered. "More we do not know, save the tremendous fact that it must be a product of consciousness."

"Isn't that going too far?"

"No, I think not. The evidence confronts us in the mathematical shape of the aperture. No haphazard object created that. Conscious creatures undoubtedly made what we shall look upon to-morrow and despatched it, using our planet as their target; but how they succeeded in their immense task, or what was their purpose in attempting it, we may never know."

"Perhaps they fired at something else and hit us by accident," suggested Norah. "It must have been an utter gamble, at any rate, because if they had missed the land and fallen into the middle of the Atlantic or Pacific, all their trouble would have been wasted."

"Most true," admitted Felix,—"just as we are wasting our trouble now in futile suppositions. Probably a great deal of scientific activity would have been saved us if it had dropped unmarked into the ocean or some uncivilized and unexplored region of the globe; but it didn't; it landed on the British Isles—whether for good or ill remains to be seen."

"You'll see to-morrow," promised his sister. "Now do go and get a little sleep, because both your mind and body will be fully occupied in a few hours. Providentially you have finished the monograph and will be free to concentrate. A man with your terrific devotion to detail can only do one thing at a time."



CHAPTER III

When morning came the professor proceeded upon his unexpected challenge with those exact and scientific methods to have been predicted. First he photographed the scene of nocturnal action from every angle and made copious notes and measurements to verify or correct the impressions of the night. Then he donned a gas mask and descended into the pit by a long ladder. He found the air normal, but was able to add some feet to the suspected depth of the great hole. Applewood stood upon the area of a prehistoric river and the soil was alluvial, being composed, at a slight distance beneath the subsoil, almost entirely of fine, red sand. One might excavate in this ceaselessly without reaching any rocky stratum or unearthing anything but widely scattered and water-worn pebbles. Unopposed therefore the bolt had fallen and penetrated to regions as yet to be explored. The chasm was thirty feet deep and its sides smoothly bored and rounded. Felix stood on the sand at the bottom, accustomed his eyes to the twilight about him and made his notes. From above came the voice of Norah urging him to ascend again. Presently he did so, and his next action was to direct Saul Medland and two assistants to set stakes at a distance of five-and-twenty yards from the pit, connect the posts with ropes and make fifty yards square of the paddock sacred ground.

The business of excavation began after lunch, when arrived the Ford brothers and listened to an exhortation from the professor. They had already been trained in similar toil and presently set about their task beneath him, while Felix sat in a garden chair at the mouth of the pit and watched them. The soil was brought up in buckets and sifted, but revealed no unusual objects. Its amount, however, proved considerable, and nearly a day's work had been completed before anything defied the spade. Then the perspiring diggers reported that they had reached a flat surface which apparently filled the circumference of the hole and would not yield.

Thereupon Felix himself descended with his gloves, a brush and a trowel. Carefully he worked over the bottom of the excavation and found it floored with a hard and circular mass of metal. What lay below could not be determined without further attack and for this purpose certain elaborate preparations would be necessary.

"Sufficient for the day," declared the professor. "To-morrow we must procure pit-props and render the place secure for our next operations. You will then dig down along one side of this object, that you may ascertain its total length and the extent to which it has penetrated the earth. We have here no aerolite, or 'thunderbolt', as you would call it, fallen from space, but a fabricated mass of metal—a projectile manufactured by conscious intelligence of a high order and despatched upon its tremendous journey for reasons we may or may not be able to determine. The future will show.

"You will have remarked," concluded Felix, "that the diameter of that circular disk of metal beneath is not much above five feet. Assuming it to be the base of a huge bullet, those familiar with ballistics would doubtless be able to form some idea of its probable size and the nature of the cannon, or mortar, that despatched it into space; but to-morrow you will be able to get to the bottom of it and ascertain its dimensions. That done, we shall consider what tackle will be needful to bring the thing out to the surface and convey it under cover of the large outhouse for examination."

So ended the first day's work, and on the following afternoon arrived pit-props and an old miner skilled in the handling of them. The third day was advanced before he had seen the pit made safe, and meantime news of the incident got afoot and journalists arrived for information. Felix himself spoke with them, permitted them to inspect the scene and informed them that, in the course of a few days, he proposed to prepare a statement for the Press.

"All in good time," he said. "An event of this nature, lying as it does wholly outside experience, must be approached with utmost caution and reserve. Theories and explanations are alike vain until we glean all that the object itself is capable of telling us. Rest assured that science will approach it from every possible angle, and until that has been done and experts competent to judge are in a position to report, the less idle gossip and futile surmise devoted to the subject, the better."

Sensational announcements none the less appeared, and the passion of the British public for free entertainment became a cause of much vexation at Applewood. Norah suggested charging an entrance fee and pointed out that deserving charities might thus become substantially the gainers; but Felix withstood her and declined to make a show of the serious business in hand.

Upon the third day the brothers Ford sank a hole at the side of the great metal bolt and in the alluvial soil were able to make good progress. When a space of four feet was cleared the rotund nature of the projectile became clear, but a

surprise awaited the explorers, for, at six feet down, the object began to slope inward to its buried apex and they were presently able to announce that they had reached the point of it.

Tom Ford emerged and reported.

"We've got to the nose of the thing, Professor," he said, "and you can now figure out its size, though not its weight. I'd say it wasn't much above seven feet long, and it's rounded off very suent and regular. Stream-lined, you might almost say: but the surface of the metal is rough. There ain't no polish to it."

Felix explained this fact before he himself descended to learn what he might.

"However tough the metal and however polished at the start," he said, "the surface was likely to be disturbed by its terrific journey. That it has reached us from some other planet of the solar system may be assumed, since no arrival from the outer abysses of space can be imagined; but even so those terrific transitions of intense heat and cold the object has encountered might well serve to corrugate its outer shell. The amazing thing appears to be that it is constructed of material capable of resisting those transitions and not disintegrating beneath them."

But he found no evidence of any injury to the mass, and such was its solidity that once again Felix wondered whether, after all, it must be man-made and its mystery soon to be discovered.

A day later came the business of dragging the projectile from the earth, for which purpose tackle was rigged and a small crane secured. Chains were fastened round the object and when once suspended, its weight proved to be considerably less than its mass had promised. At last the monster emerged, was swung clear of earth and lowered upon a stout garden trolley waiting to receive it. Norah watched with the rest and provided a very accurate simile.

"It is exactly the shape of a huge filbert," she said, and Felix agreed with her.

"In every respect it conforms to the nut we know as a Kentish cob," he admitted. "Broad at the shoulder, somewhat blunt at the apex and tapering slightly towards the base. Obviously a projectile shot from some prodigious weapon; and one would have imagined metal destined to withstand the impact of that tremendous discharge must have been compounded of something stronger than any steel of which we have knowledge. Yet the crane records that the mass weighs no considerable amount. Metallurgists must examine it and remove a portion for spectroscopic analysis."

"It has a very earthly look," declared Norah, but the professor declared that, in his opinion, evidence already existed to the contrary.

"We cannot judge by appearances," he said, "and a resemblance to a familiar, natural object must not mislead you. Science of an advanced order has sent this bolt to earth, and as for its shape, no doubt science also determined that. Its comparative lightness interests me most."

Time threw light upon this problem; but for a while Felix avoided publicity until further facts were definitely learned, and then he contributed them to the Press.

'Examination', he wrote, 'reveals significant peculiarities in the visitant from a region as yet uncertain. Greenwich is making the necessary calculations which may throw light upon its possible and most probable point of departure with the importance attaching thereto; but for the moment science is concerned upon the object itself. The photograph published herewith indicates its shape and the subjoined measurements record its size. A portion, weighing one pound and three ounces, was cut from the surface with very considerable difficulty, for I would not permit any application of heat in the process, for reasons concerned with future research, and the fragment was cut with cold chisels from the mass. Experts attest that they have never been called to deal with metal of such adamant formation; but it proves not quite so light as it first appeared to be—a fact that immediately confirms my first suspicion and points to one conclusion alone. To this I will return.

'Examination of the metal reveals only familiar substances and the spectroscopic bands usually recorded in stellar research. No unknown material can be proclaimed; but the nature of the amalgam or synthesis responsible for this inflexible mass has not as yet been determined. It is but little heavier than our steel, yet of much greater density and rigidity, and if its secret can be discovered we are presented with an armour superior to any as yet in use.

'Before proceeding to the obvious conclusion presented by these facts, I will describe a circumstance that supports it and

leaves me and my present coadjutors in little doubt. Round the projectile and apparently welded into the body of it just below its widest girth, there runs a hoop of metal encircling the whole. This cannot have been designed for strength since nothing stronger than the body itself is within our knowledge; but this girdle—composed of some metal differing apparently from the rest—is imposed for a separate purpose. It is sunk level with the bolt and can have offered no drag upon the discharge when the projectile was fired. If we, then, consider the conclusion I am about to report, the probable purpose of it becomes apparent.

'In a word we are dealing, not with a solid object, but a shell. A gifted observer on first seeing the bolt after it was raised to the surface, remarked that it looked exactly like a huge filbert nut; and it is now almost certain that the nut contains a kernel. The disproportion between its weight and bulk prove that the interior must be hollow, and the surrounding band is therefore much what we might have expected as a source of safety and protection. More data to confirm these convictions are available. Though not the result of my personal observation, a gifted and acute young scientist from the Museum of Redchester submitting the surface of the great object to careful survey under strong magnification, proves the existence of hair-like lines extending from each side of the base and meeting at the point or apex of the shell. These exactly divide it into two equal parts, and there can be no doubt that they represent the region of juncture between the two sides. Mathematical calculations as to weight deduce the extent of the cavity within; but size has clearly been sacrificed to safety and the extent of the receptacle buried within the walls of the shell cannot, after all, prove very considerable. Its shape we have yet to learn when the tremendous business of cutting the object open has been completed; but we have reason to hope that, once the encircling hoop of metal is removed, subsequent operations may prove less arduous.

'Meantime it is asked that the public will abstain from intruding upon our privacy, and rest content with the knowledge that everything is in skilled hands and our procedure approved by the highest scientific authorities. All further information will be immediately despatched to the Press and the British Broadcasting and Columbian Corporations.'

"Nothing could be better," said Norah, "and I hope now we shall have a little peace. The glare of the limelight is most unpleasant."

"I share your misery," replied her brother; "but we must endure as best we can. Far greater events may lie in store; and should that be so, I am hopeful that the whole business will prove outside my province and be taken out of my hands. There can be no shadow of doubt that the shell contains material destined to become historic, but what is its nature and what domain of science it will directly challenge none can say until we know."

"It certainly is not likely to have much to do with lizards," declared Norah. "And, in that case, I hope you will soon be at peace. Our little world is convulsed and nothing could be more unpleasant. Do you know what Mrs. Midgley-Masters said to me yesterday?"

He shook his head.

"Nothing of consequence, I should imagine."

"She is a crime 'fan' and reads modern novels without ceasing in order to find the perfect murder. Her quest has so far failed, but she still struggles on, paying a double subscription to The Times Library in hope some day to reach her goal. She is greatly interested in the projectile and suspects that we may yet find it embalms a horrible but perfect murder."

Felix sighed.

"Why do we enter into terms of friendship with this sort of people?" he asked. "It is bad for our morale, my love, and provokes that unconscious contempt for our fellow creatures which undermines faith and leads to pessimism."

"No doubt distance lends enchantment to Mrs. Midgley-Masters and plenty of others," admitted his sister. "We owe her a lunch, as a matter of fact; but everybody will understand that you are far too occupied just now for any social functions."

"I do no entertaining of any sort or kind and accept no hospitality for an indefinite period," he assured her.

"Be at peace and let nothing divert your energies from your task," begged Norah. "I have let it be thoroughly understood that, for the present, we are practically out of bounds and untouchable. Everybody understands the importance of your task and most of our acquaintances are quite sensible about it. Colonel Pegram and Brigadier Rook both feel perfectly positive that it came from Germany, or else Russia, or perhaps Italy. They regard it rather like the magic bottle in the

Arabian Nights, and much doubt whether any attempt to open it ought to be made."

"There is nobody like a retired military man to voice the prevalent distrust and international animosity afflicting every civilized nation," answered Felix.

CHAPTER IV

To liberate the bolt from its girdle occupied the time of two skilled smiths for a week. It was cut away piecemeal and found to be embedded in the metal of the main mass to a depth of six inches. The chemists tested it and reported that one of the constituents embraced a new element as yet unrecorded. "The result of its removal is definite," so Felix explained to Norah. "When this tremendous stricture was finally cut away, the delicate and illusive lines, discovered by that able young man from the museum, became more apparent, and it is now quite clear that the shell has been composed of two equal portions, perfectly fitted together. How to divide them and operate that no injury shall overtake what lies within is our next problem. Infinite care must be taken that nothing as yet hidden shall be injured, but great force may be demanded to get through the metal at all. We hope, however, that the two halves are not actually welded."

"What is your theory of the shell, darling?" asked Norah.

It was Sunday evening and Felix, after the usual cold Sabbath supper, smoked a cigar and rested from his labours until the morning.

"Speaking in such uncertain terms as I should only address to you," he answered, "I have an idea as to the nature of the bolt; but, as yet, none whatever concerning its contents. The object emphatically comes from a conscious and highly organized society of beings for a definite purpose; but only the contents can afford their reason; and it is quite possible that the actual secret it contains may prove of a nature beyond our understanding. If nothing but an insoluble riddle awaits us, then the enterprise of these unknown beings will be wasted, but having high intelligence, we may assume that they will recognize they are seeking to communicate with another order of creation than their own and endeavour to send us something capable of interpretation. They will surely simplify the approach and apply their wits to the most likely means of establishing some sort of understanding, though how such a thing may be accomplished, I admit I can form no sort of opinion. Success demands imagination of a high order and, as you know, I have nothing whatever to be described as imagination myself. That belongs to the province of art rather than science, and the unknown might have created a link between art and science which does not exist on earth at present. In fact, art and science entertain a mutual distrust here which I am disposed to regret."

"Has Greenwich done anything useful about the problem of where the thing came from?" she asked, and Felix shook his head.

"Since my directions were acknowledged, I have, as yet, heard nothing," he answered.

"Then they don't believe in it," declared Norah.

"A large body of scientific persons do not believe in it," he replied. "They do not doubt that the bolt fell and, as you know, numerous eminent men have come to see it; but there is a considerable and increasing body of opinion that the thing was man-made and can only be explained on that assumption."

"Like the colonel and brigadier," said Norah.

"Time will show," he continued. "As for the missile itself, I am disposed to believe that we shall presently find it was constructed much upon our own principle of the thermos flask. The problem for such a terrific journey was to create a receptacle as far as possible impervious to the prodigiously high and low temperatures which the exterior of the bolt would have to encounter. This was probably understood and accomplished. Thus life might have been despatched to us with comparative safety."

"'Life'! My dear man, how in the name of fortune could any living thing have been packed into that small space without air or means to support it?" exclaimed his sister.

"Ask yourself another question," he answered. "How could life be immured within the sepulchral pyramids of Egypt and buried for five thousand years, yet delight our eyes with the inflorescence of the mummy pea?"

Mrs. Hapgood gazed admiringly upon him.

"Of course!" she said. "And not only seeds, but pictures. Pictures would mean art and tell us more than anything else in their power to tell us. We can't trust to language, because if they know how to write, it would be quite beyond our power

to know how to read their writing."

"That difficulty might be conquered under certain circumstances," replied Toddleben; "but only under certain circumstances. Assuming a written tongue composed of words, and those words composed of letters, a Rosetta Stone, or some such clue might accompany any sort of literature which they would be in a position to despatch. But these ideas pertain to humanity. When we translated the Egyptian hieroglyphics, we were occupied with the earlier work of fellow men, who thought, acted and created language after our own manner. We can assume no foundation of agreement between our arts and crafts and those practised by the beings responsible for this projectile. Intellect of a high order they undoubtedly possess, but to take it for granted that, because they possess intellect, they remotely resemble us in body or mind, would be most unscientific. We are so used to think in terms of common humanity that it is difficult to imagine evolution arriving at conscious intelligence by any other road than our noble selves; but grant the approach may have been made by quite a different advance; concede that some other order of creation in some other planet may have attained to reason by perfectly natural and inevitable processes, and you are faced with an unlimited field. One can go even further without becoming unscientific, or allowing too much rein to imagination. It may be quite probable that the universe contains beings who differ substantially from any order of creation known to us, and possess no representatives upon earth within our knowledge."

"That is an exceedingly horrible idea," declared Norah, "and I hope you may be mistaken. It inclines me to agree with the colonel and the brigadier—that it would be much wiser to drop the bolt into the Atlantic Ocean and have done with it."

"It is a startling idea," admitted Felix, "but I see nothing horrible about it. The only difficulty would be to know how such a creature could get into touch with us, or we with it."

"The very sight of us might kill it with horror, and the sight of it might kill us with horror," said Mrs. Hapgood.

But a time soon came when the projectile yielded some measure of its inner secret, though no immediate answer to the mystery resulted. Indeed, the purpose of what it contained defied conjecture while giving rise to a flood of new theories. A stage was reached when, upon the invitation of the British Association, at that time about to meet in the city of York, Professor Toddleben prepared a paper concerning the whole subject, and informed both the learned and unlearned world of precisely how the matter stood. He also submitted his own suggestion as to future procedure, when the developments in hand should furnish results.

The introduction of the paper, which Felix read himself and which was afterwards widely circulated, concerned facts already recorded and needing not any repetition; but no words better than his own would be likely to tell the subsequent story, and we quote his report of the bolt's contents and the actions thereupon undertaken. Thus he wrote and read:

"On the liberation of the powerful cincture, or girdle, of the object, lessening of tension became revealed and the formation of the projectile obvious. It was composed of two equal portions, and delicate leverage presently increased the gap between them. They fitted together with great perfection of workmanship and were separated without injury. Investigation then proved the head of the shell to be solid throughout and doubtless constructed to withstand the terrific impact when its journey ended and it reached earth. In which connection I may point an element of good fortune which attended its arrival, for in our alluvial and sandy soil no obstacle was offered. It penetrated at a high outward temperature and burrowed deeply without damaging itself in any way.

"On its being opened, we were first confronted with a receptacle measuring four feet three inches long, within the thickness of the shell and situated somewhat beneath the meridional line, being thus considerably nearer the base than the apex, but protected by walls of solid metal on every side. The aperture was packed with non-conductive material of apparently vegetable origin. It presented the appearance of powdered cork and possessed a slight pungency of scent. As the shell was prized open, inch by inch, this substance exuded, and every grain has been collected and preserved. If I may offer a simile from a familiar object, I should say that we were here faced with the theory of the thermos flask. Means had, in fact, been taken to protect the interior from those extremities of temperature to which the bolt was destined to be exposed. That the beings responsible for it were well aware of the coming ordeal seems evident.

"Bedded in this packing and revealed after its removal, I myself discovered a further receptacle—a cylinder of highly polished yellow metal, two feet six inches long and eighteen inches wide at the circumference. Analysis has proved this to be made of gold fortified with brass.

"I may say that every morsel of the shell and its contents have been most faithfully preserved, and their ultimate destination await such decisions as science may presently attain.

"Examination of the golden cylinder revealed a spring that yielded to pressure and brought it open in my hands. It was constructed much on the principle of the shell itself: in two equal portions, and it was tightly packed with material as like our cotton-wool as can be imagined. This mass of wadding yielded to my manipulation and presently were revealed three square boxes precisely similar in every respect. They were eight inches long, six inches deep, and made from wood of a dark colour and very fine grain. This timber is of extreme hardness and every box showed a high, vitreous polish as of glass. As you are aware, one of these boxes was conveyed to the Director of Kew for examination. It proves to be coated with a transparent metallic glaze and the precise nature of the wood cannot be ascertained; but there would seem to be nothing abnormal about it save its stony fabric. Teak, or mahogany, oak or any other known timber, soft when submitted to comparison.

"There was no difficulty about opening the boxes. The first contained another box of metal hermetically sealed; the second was full of some vegetable seed; the third held an egg most carefully packed in some silken substance of exquisite softness, and silver colour. And these three small objects were all the bolt contained, all these skilled and intelligent creatures from the unknown despatched to us! This is a thought to waken the utmost perplexity, and I am not going to pretend that any definite explanation can be as yet submitted by me. Nor, thus far, have any of you gentlemen present (who have examined the objects yourselves and know all about them) been able to arrive at a rational theory of such an extraordinary present from the unknown. At first sight it would seem that the mountain had produced—not indeed a mouse—but something equally insignificant, for consider the nature of the huge preparations that despatched our projectile to earth and weigh the possibilities offered by it to bring under terrestrial knowledge evidence of other conscious beings capable of establishing relations with our sphere. Language being perhaps impossible, one had certainly anticipated illustrations that talk a common tongue, or other evidences of the intellect that fashioned the bolt and urged it upon its course with such astounding accuracy. Even a man like myself, given the opportunity, had risen to some measure of greater invention and exhausted our human resources to better purpose. Surely the combined wit and wisdom of those savants hidden in space might have packed into the bowels of their metal messenger material of more immediate and fruitful value than a small box as yet to be opened, a handful of vegetable seeds as yet to be germinated, and an egg as yet to be hatched? So it must undoubtedly appear to the great body of scientific and learned persons whom I have the honour to address.

"But, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we must not be too hasty. We must not as yet allow disappointment, or any shadow of impatience to cloud judgment or darken council. The conscious mind is a subject so vast that to limit its possibilities within the narrow radius of our own reason, or imagine that we may assume ourselves to be the pioneers and vanguard of the universe's consciousness, would be unworthy either of the wits we claim, or that ceaseless search for truth and more truth to which we devote our lives and our prime energies. It follows, I think, that because this communication from extra-terrestrial regions appears so trivial, this assumption may result—not from any mental inferiority in those who despatched it, but because our own mentality is as yet incapable of apprehending their purpose. They may be inferior to ourselves; they may have operated from a lower standard of intelligence and upon values far beneath our own. Their knowledge is doubtless built up on a different plane; but that knowledge need not of necessity lie behind our own knowledge; nor can we deny that it may embrace understanding and perception of reality so far ahead of our own that, as yet, we lack the bridge or connecting link ever to recognize what these fellow creatures were driving at when they sent us their seeds, their egg and their little, unopened box.

"Now far be it from me to presume a hypothesis, or advance a theory where my learned betters have so far failed to submit one; but the end is not yet and I am only concerned at present to suggest the unknown purpose, without for one moment pretending to comprehend the reason. Nor should I even presume to detain you with any air-drawn and nebulous opinion whatsoever, but for one extraordinary circumstance—an apparent almost grotesque coincidence which entitles me to venture upon this doubtful ground.

"As you are aware I have not opened the third little box at present; but I have sent the seeds to Kew, and the report upon them is that they present no determinate factors and cannot be assigned to any botanical order until they come up and declare themselves. There remains the egg and, strange though it must appear, probably there is not one in this assembly better equipped to pronounce upon the egg than myself.

"An assertion so pedantic and vainglorious may well shock you; but when I assert the unquestionable genesis of this egg, you will, I venture to hope, condone it, for during the past five-and-forty years I have submitted thousands of similar eggs to the process of incubation, and if I do not know an egg of the Lacerta, or lizard family when I see it, then is a lifetime of devotion vain.

"Our egg is somewhat larger than that of a domestic duck and it has the unspotted, delicate, blue colour of the spring sky. The shell is of a perfect oval and composed of a leathery, calcareous substance after the manner of the lizard kind. All lizards as you know are oviparous and propagate their species in this manner. They do not tend their eggs, but lay them as chance may determine and leave their future prosperity or destruction to Nature. Now, proceeding on grounds of my own experience, I learn that only a large lizard was responsible for this large egg, and I find—still on terrestrial grounds—that no more than two of any known species could be responsible for it. In the particular of its cerulean colour alone is it unique and differs from hundreds of eggs that I have incubated in my time; but eggs of this size are only laid by two species of the lizards known to science. These are the Monitors and the Iguanidæ. Monitor niloticus—the great Nile monitor—is the largest of his race. He is a marsh-lover and carnivorous. I therefore dismiss him, for reasons presently to be stated. Iguana rhinolophus—that superb and stately creature—is a crested Leguan only found in the forest regions of tropical America. He attains a length of five feet and is a noble lizard of rare distinction. I am disposed to believe, then, that we deal with the egg of a great iguana, and if you ask me why such an assumption, I point to the seeds and the unopened metal receptacle. My theory is admittedly vague, but may for a moment be allowed to cover such meagre facts as it is founded upon. I believe that the egg, now in my care at a suitable temperature, will hatch a creature whose food supply has come with it. I suspect the seeds will germinate speedily and produce vegetation, fruit, or both, suited to its needs; and I guess that the unopened box contains nourishment in some form to support the dawn of life in the creature and send it on its way to maturity. I plump therefore for something in the nature of iguana, because these lizards are vegetarians and subsist on fruit and foliage.

"That is where we stand, and though the event may confound my predictions, though the grain may not germinate and the egg under terrestrial conditions may not hatch, and the unopened box be found to contain quite another key to the riddle, I submit that we are operating correctly, but am, of course, prepared to proceed on other lines if in your judgment the situation can be rendered more secure in any other manner."

A discussion followed and Professor Toddleben discovered that, on the vital point, a considerable volume of scientific opinion flowed against him. Even artists are not more acerb than the learned when in opposition, and an elderly biologist named Linklater, who set truth higher than courtesy and did not like Felix, now stated his opinions.

"I submit," he said, "that the precious time of the association is being devoted to no good purpose. Being old enough to remember certain painful incidents of the past, when an unprincipled 'explorer' imposed upon us and awakened general ridicule of science as a result, I should like to declare these proceedings to be eminently unprofitable. The assumption that a cumbrous cube of doubtful metal has fallen in East Devon from some region in the solar system as yet unknown, and the discovery that it contains a box of seeds and a lizard's egg may provide an entertaining fairy story, but affords material by no means in keeping with our deliberations, or the worldwide attention they very properly command. What are the facts? Astronomy assigns the only possible starting-point for the projectile as the planet Venus, where the existence of anything that could possess life is subject to the gravest doubt. That this object contains a lizard's egg admits of no question, since our first British authority on the species finds himself convinced of the fact; but why strain possibility when the element of probability stands so high? Why assume an event that in some degree outrages science, when a far more plausible explanation must occur to any thinking man? The reason of this elaborate and costly jest has yet to be discovered, but for my own part I am convinced that we need not seek beyond our own planet for its explanation. The bolt lands, as it were, on the doorstep of our friend, Professor Toddleben—the Lizard King—and its contents include a lizard's egg—the familiar harbinger of an iguana, in his opinion. Does no absurdity lurk in this coincidence? Are we to believe that conscious beings far beyond the confines of earth have heard of the learned professor's fame, that his labours among our reptile population rejoice the universe and are matter for satisfaction throughout the Milky Way? Has he been honoured with some super-lizard from another sphere—a being destined, perhaps, to come as an exemplar and model for our mundane lizards and lift their primitive spirits to nobler ambition and higher achievement? To ask such a ridiculous question is to reveal that we waste time in the regions of romance. In a word, this story is a joke and may be capable of an altogether different explanation. For my part I should be prepared to assert that our valued and honoured friend is the victim of a clumsy and somewhat cruel hoax, that the so-called bolt was

manufactured perhaps at no great distance from his own domain and inserted by night within his paddock. The deed done, an explosion was created to waken his family and himself; while infinite puzzlement and confusion followed, as the practical jokers doubtless intended. In fact, had Toddleben gone to the police, instead of to science, seen through the insult put upon him and concerned himself with those probably responsible for it, they might have been laid by the heels long ago."

The assembled savants debated the matter in their professorial fashion, some supporting Felix and others agreeing that any explanation belonged to earth. None could see how it was possible that the birth of an iguana, even if it furnished a new species, was going to explain the business, and all determined that the problem had occupied enough time and might well be left until future developments should demand further consideration.

"For my part," summed up the President of the Association, who admired Felix and had taken the chair for him, "I am in agreement with those who suspect a terrestrial explanation of this very singular event; and when that comes, as we may hope it soon will, we shall probably find the incident removed from the domains of general science altogether and its futile purpose explained in terms of human aberration."

Norah, who had attended the meeting, expressed herself as highly indignant with the air of scepticism created by her brother's revelations.

"A jealous, mean lot," she told him. "They would all have given their heads if such a thing had happened to them and brought them on to the centre of the stage; but because it happened to you, they throw cold water on it. Nothing could have been less scientific than the criticisms, and when that miserable old Linklater tried to be funny, I very nearly cried out 'Order!' I wish now that I had."

But Felix was not in the least perturbed.

"They were all inspired by their enthusiasm for truth," he answered, "and much that they said was worthy of attention. I hold no brief for the projectile—far from it. The thing is a great bore and I honestly wish that it had descended in Timbuctoo rather than at Applewood. I have, however, heard nothing as yet to convince me that my fellow man is responsible for it. Massive evidence exists to the contrary. But, though my sense of humour is rudimentary, I did laugh with Linklater at my own expense, because the fact that this mighty messenger brought me, of all people, a lizard's egg is a distinctly humorous circumstance."

"It may be providential rather than humorous," declared Norah. "At any rate, it is much too soon for those claiming a scientific mind to giggle. However, Linklater called you 'The Lizard King', and there's many a true word spoken in jest. When do you think the egg will hatch?"

"I had expected some learned person to ask me that question," replied Felix; "but nobody did. One cannot speak with any certainty, because one is quite ignorant as to when it was laid."

"They would have been careful to send a fresh egg, don't you think?" asked Norah.

"Undoubtedly. The choice of the egg must have commanded most careful attention. We cannot tell how long it was on the way, because as yet we know not whence it started, or the space of time and distance travelled before the bolt entered our field of gravitation and headed for earth; but I have considered the point and am disposed to believe that, if the egg hatches at all, it will be within the space of two or three weeks at the outside."

CHAPTER V

Before the professor's activities were again challenged Mildred Hapgood came to spend a few days at Applewood with her mother and tell of her holiday in Norway. She was not apparently interested in the trip, but had no little to say on the subject of a fellow tourist. Mildred possessed beauty and great vivacity. Like the rest of her kind, she loved experience and scorned convictions of any sort. She was energetic, intelligent and avid for adventure; and now unconsciously she revealed something in that direction. It transpired that a bright lad from the Russian Legation was on the holiday boat also, enjoying his vacation, and Mildred had evidently found him to possess exceptional qualities of intellect and remarkable grasp of social and political problems. He, too, had apparently been much struck with her own unusual attainments. They found themselves in whole-hearted agreement as to the way in which the world might be set right, and the young man from Moscow had exacted a promise from Miss Hapgood that their acquaintance should ripen when both returned to London.

"What I liked about him," said Mildred, "was his power of synthesis and his philosophical outlook. He doesn't dogmatize and lay down the law. In strict confidence, he confessed to me that he did not by any means see eye to eye with the Soviets. His ideal is by no means Communism pure and simple, and in his heart he believes that our democratic principles are far sounder than advanced Socialism. I should say he was too sympathetic and too human for his own safety, and he admits that it is very difficult to practise humanism in Russia, because the regime is not human and overrides all other interests than the State. But he is brilliant and very cautious. It took some time for him really to trust me; he said that I was the first kindred spirit he had met with among professional people in England."

Mildred flowed on in this fashion, indicating her ingenuous admiration for the Sclav; and when Norah asked what he was like and from what family he might be descended, she had the answer at her fingers' ends.

"He is thirty-two and amazingly handsome and virile," she told them. "Somewhat Asiatic really, with those strange Eastern eyes that usually mean something akin to genius. He speaks perfect English and is in a sort of way English-minded. He told me frankly that had he not been a Russian, he would have wished to be British; but he has a patriotic devotion to his country, though he keeps it hidden and assumes a sort of diplomatic disguise of indifference except when with me."

"Deep and cunning, I expect," suggested Norah.

"Deep certainly, and crafty up to a point. You have to be pretty crafty in Russia if you want to preserve your liberty and life. We all know the end of their leading men. He says that Stalin is terribly suspicious of ability and is quite remorseless the moment that any of his associates begins to be popular, or show exceptional resource. To differ from him on any question of policy is to take the first step to your own extinction. Infinite tact is demanded and Serge Boluski is made of tact. He was much surprised to learn that I worked in our War Office, but never asked me a question that I could not easily answer. Yet he liked me to ask him questions and gave me a hint that I pleased and impressed him by my grasp of his own difficulties. He is tremendously ambitious himself; but admits that ambition is a very dangerous impulse in Russia."

"Don't allow yourself to become too attracted, Milly," advised Felix. "I venture to think that your mother would much regret it if you lost your heart to a Muscovite."

"She needn't fear," promised the girl. "We are both far too interested in our own careers to contemplate handicapping ourselves in that way. The friendship, so to call it, is on quite a different plane."

"See that it remains so, then," begged Norah, "and ask your English men friends what they think of Mr. Boluski."

But Mildred scorned the suggestion.

"I do my own thinking, mother. The average man can always be trusted to come to a wrong conclusion about the superior man. When a person's jealous, their judgment is worthless."

"I don't like the sound of him and it's no good pretending I do," declared Mrs. Hapgood.

But the engaging Russian soon ceased to interest, for two days before Milly's holiday was ended, there came Saul Medland to see the professor while he was yet at his morning meal.

"It have hatched out in the night, master!" he said. "A lizard, as you foretold us, and never did I see a more god-forsaken, hideous object, begging your pardon for the word."

Felix had already leapt from the table. Upon Sunday he always enjoyed a sausage and fried potatoes for breakfast and, as a rule, looked forward to them; but now he abandoned these good things despite Norah's protest and hastened to his incubator.

"It's for all the world like they efts in the pond, Professor," explained Saul, "and yet again it ain't, because it haven't got no tail to name and be all head and eyes. A proper monster."

"No tail to name, Saul? Are you sure? I should certainly have anticipated a tail," answered Felix.

"A most creepy creature," declared the gardener. "He looked me up and down but didn't show no fear. I wouldn't say but what he might be poisonous, Professor."

"Most improbable, my dear fellow," replied Toddleben. "There is but one poisonous lizard in our knowledge, and though this creature may possess exceptional attributes, the power to poison is not likely to be one of them."

"Another thing have happened," continued Saul. "They seeds that come in the bolt have rose in the night. You can most see 'em growing—for all the world like a potato, or some such."

"I'm glad to hear it," replied Felix. "If this is destined to be the creature's foodstuff, the quicker it matures, the better. I have yet to learn from Kew, but it may well be that we are dealing with a solanum as you suggest."

Soon he stood beside the incubator and looked down through its glass lid at the mysterious fragment of life beneath. The lizard had broken its shell and crept away into a corner where the morning sun already touched its cradle. Felix beheld an object that challenged his knowledge and confirmed it in certain particulars, but confounded it in others. Here was most certainly an infant iguana, yet it differed in radical particulars from the species, and the differences cast the professor down. Milly had followed him and exclaimed in horror at what she saw. The thing was already six inches long and had quite outgrown its covering, but it presented no sinuous and graceful lizard lines, being squat and toad-like with an extraordinary, bulbous head that towered over its eyes, exquisite and perfect little front paws and sturdy, muscular extremities. The tail was rudimentary.

"We have here," began Felix, falling into his professional manner, "something unique, yet obviously linked with the familiar. Either this iguana is hopelessly deformed—as a result possibly of its awful journey through space—or it belongs to a species of which we possess no knowledge. You will observe the incipient crest and dewlap of *Iguana rhinolophus*. The colouring is also indicated in the body of the reptile, where olive green and emerald green blend upon the adult. But snake and lizard have flat heads: their brain is very small. Here is a creature with a lofty skull—a cranium out of all proportion to its size. It may, of course, be no more than a protuberance having nothing to do with the creature's brain content. Time will show if it lives and develops; but, as I say, two alternatives confront us. We may be looking at a deformed specimen of the common iguana, or a new species, having different habits and qualities. Iguana is an arboreal lizard and nocturnal. This creature's eyes prove it probably nocturnal, but I should not consider it to be a tree lizard owing to the aborted tail."

"You can see it growing anyway," declared Milly.

"It has a lidded and an amazingly lustrous eye," continued the professor, "and it is no doubt dumb after its kind. The abnormalities may mean something, but it is impossible as yet to say what. It is growing as you say. Such swift development indicates the need for sustenance. We will examine the box within a box, which I have always maintained meant food."

Felix fetched the receptacle, a tin-opener and a saltspoon. When he had taken the top from the metal container, a smell as of musk melon instantly pervaded the greenhouse and Toddleben permitted himself a note of triumph.

"I was right," he said. "I did not err. This vegetable jelly has been compounded from fruit, and I have no doubt the creature will partake of it."

He opened the glass lid of the incubator, where the lizard reposed on warm silver-sand, and offered it a saltspoon of the fragrant jelly. It showed no alarm, set its nose to the spoon, appeared to consider a moment and then devoured the

contents. Its wonderful eyes looked up at Felix. It lay upon its side, stretched and lifted its front paws.

"One more spoonful," he said, "then it will probably go to sleep."

The lizard ate a second spoonful, with less gusto than the first, then its head sank between its shoulders; its amazing eyes were shut and it fell into slumber.

"It's grown three inches while we were watching it!" said Mildred. "How big is it likely to get, uncle?"

"Their growth is slow as a rule," he answered, "but here we have something outside experience concerning which we cannot speak of rules. In a day or two we may be better able to judge. It is worthy of note that you can see these plants growing too. Development is purely a relative term, and everything whence these creatures come may go through far swifter phases of growth and expansion than we know here. Our conditions of air and water, light and temperature, are possibly quite different from those which have created them, and there is a danger in that, for living things either forced, or retarded, are subject to considerable strain. I must watch over it closely."

He drew cotton-wool about the sleeping lizard, having first set a saucer containing water, beside it; and then he looked at the young seedling plants and nibbled a leaf.

"Now do come in and let them fry you another sausage," advised his niece; but Felix felt not hungry.

"In two hours," he said, "we must feed again if the lizard is awake. Meantime put this confection into the refrigerator."

The girl tasted the lizard's provender and found it delicious.

"Like a classy fruit salad," she declared.

"One hopes that he may find our fruit agreeable," said Felix. "A fragment of the jelly will go to London to-morrow for examination. But we must treasure it. No doubt the amount was calculated to sustain him until his plants became ready."

From that hour the professor lived for the lizard and, long afterwards, confessed that certain highly unscientific suspicions had inspired him to do so. He kept them to himself, indeed, until no manner of doubt remained, and of such a startling quality were they that, when the truth dawned upon him, though not wholly unexpected, it unmanned Felix. "My bravest and most intelligent achievement"—so he declared at the end of his long life—"was to face the problem that discovery demanded, though, looking back, I shall always feel that I might have done it better."

Norah came to see the growing lizard upon the second morning of its existence. She was warned by Mildred to fortify her mind against an object lacking beauty, but brought observation and good sense to her ordeal and experienced no repulsion. In truth she admired the little creature and, after watching it silently for five minutes, declared actual pleasure.

"I think it a very wonderful thing," she said, "and I believe that once you get over its queer forehead—so unlike other lizards—you begin to notice other points that they haven't got. It is going to be a beautiful green and grow a lovely pattern, and its crest and dewlap will be like other iguanas you have raised—a dazzling scarlet. One misses a tail, because a tail ends them off so gracefully; but nothing could be ugly with such amazing eyes. Their size alone is remarkable, but they have something in them that actually gives the creature an expression. That is so extraordinary, because I never saw a lizard with any expression before. Perhaps it is the lofty brow. It regards you very closely and it has been looking at me ever since I came to the glass; but it doesn't look at you as animals look: it looks at you as a human baby does!"

"Ah!" said the professor, "a nice distinction, my love, and worthy of you."

"But no baby ever had such eyes, of course," she added. "They are more wonderful than any eyes that ever I saw."

"It sees in the dark as well as in the light," he said. "It can proceed about its business at any time. I am training it from the first to regard me as a trustworthy companion."

They left the lizard then and sat together upon a garden seat in the sunshine, where Norah knitted and the professor discoursed.

"I shall not tell you of the very strange ideas formulating in my mind as yet," he said, "but by your sagacious comment on

the iguana, you reminded me curiously of biological facts in our own human story. Will it bore you if I discuss human origins for a moment?"

"My dear fellow, you never bore me," declared Mrs. Hapgood. "Should I have stopped with you all these years and made you my hero if you had?"

But his voice soon turned Norah drowsy, as it was wont to do.

"Such an amazing ascension," he began, "even if we omit the earlier chapters and begin at the Tree Shrew, for example. He found safety for himself and his family in the tree-tops, as did his follower, the Spectral Tarsier, whose giant eyes glimmered like little moons, where he ran aloft through the nocturnal forests. Upward, ever upward we went until we came to the primates."

"Of York and Canterbury," added Norah, striving to show intelligence, but very somnolent in the sunshine.

"You are not listening," he said with some reproach. "I have not reached the archbishops yet, but only arrived at our super-apes. Consider the tremendous advance that followed them, the preparation for coming consciousness and the first step to it without doubt. The great monkeys left the trees, descended to earth, stood on their hind-legs for the first time and transformed their fore-paws into hands! I feel no doubt that human reason was born with that prodigious event. Ape-man appeared and Homo Sapiens followed after. From pithecanthropus to savage we climbed through the waste of countless years; and forward we still tramp on our endless march, already claiming civilization, although, in my opinion, that still lies as far ahead of us as the jungle lies behind."

"Perhaps we are about half-way," suggested Norah, who had kept awake since his reproof.

"Possibly; but I pursue these reflections for a purpose. We must not permit ourselves to become unduly sanguine touching this infant iguana; and yet none can regard it without a considerable challenge. Food for abundant thought is there in those strange, receptive eyes and abnormal forehead. One has also to recollect that saurians are of infinitely greater age than the other orders of creation that followed them after lapse of many centuries."

"We shall keep our nerve about it whatever happens," promised Norah. "You never lost your nerve in your life, and I only remember to have done so very seldom."

"One cannot presume to foretell the processes of evolution in other planets than our own," he continued. "Truth demands the ever-open mind. But a side-issue—a sort of reminder—occurs to me. The vast reptiles of earth's childhood have left their fossil skeletons and science has recreated them from these fragments. And what do we find? That many of these formidable monsters stood upright! They may actually have been on the way to consciousness, when Nature changed her mind about them."

"Who shall blame her if she did?" asked Norah. "If things of that sort had developed brains, the world might have become even more impossible than it is."

"That is pure supposition, my love," he replied. "Conscious lizards, with vegetarian instincts and peaceable inclinations, might have made a much pleasanter world of it than we have. It needs, of course, more imagination than I possess to see the sort of civilization that such creatures would have developed; but one has no right to assume that, given intellect, they are likely to have fallen very far beneath our own achievements."

Mrs. Hapgood conceded as much.

"Quite," she said. "In fact, it doesn't need a fearful amount of imagination to admit they might have done much better."

"You see where my thoughts are tending," answered Felix. "For the present we will put these reflections out of our minds, Norah. They are unscientific and therefore disorderly. But we have broken the ground and indicated strange possibilities that cannot be ignored."

"It's rather awful in a way," she said; "but, of course, that's not the way to look at it. One never knows exactly what shape one's duty will take; though, as a rule, you can assume it won't be pleasant."

"The thing is to do it to the best of our power," he replied. "Given certain eventualities, science may desire to remove the iguana from my keeping; and in that case it would be my duty to relinquish it; but we have now reached a point when

I should most deeply regret any such intervention."

"It's your lizard and you have a perfect right to stick to it," declared his sister. "I should like to see anybody dare to take it away. Who on earth could bring up a lizard better than you, or know a quarter as much about it? And what happens if we find the thing has a will of its own?"

"In that stupendous event, it will have to do what it is told, like everybody else, and respect our manners and customs," answered Felix.

"Unless it can improve upon them," suggested Norah.

CHAPTER VI

The Director of Kew wrote to Professor Toddleben and confirmed a discovery that Felix had already made for himself.

"Your plant," he said, "belongs to no existing species in our knowledge, yet so nearly resembles solanum and develops so precisely along those lines that we may without impropriety attribute it to that family, unless future, definite contradictions shall appear. But what is infinitely more interesting than the thing itself appears in its unparalleled speed of growth. We are faced with a vegetable that, in its relation to time, upsets our knowledge and confounds all experience. Germination proved speedy but not remarkable and the seedlings were submitted to different temperatures, that we might learn which suited them best. We found that the higher the temperature, the speedier the growth and the better the progress and well-being of the plants. Strange to say, they prefer light soil to anything rich, and the more arid the conditions, the more sparing the water, the swiffler they attain to perfection. They appreciate such conditions as suit the cacti, and the more dry and hot we keep them, the more succulent is the foliage. When I tell you that many of our plants are already in flower—a week from germination—and standing two feet tall, with fleshy leaves six inches long, you will realize this astounding adaptation to conditions beyond our knowledge. The blossom is that of a glorified potato and I should judge that the coming fruit will resemble a tomato, or a large aubergine. We shall not have to wait long to see. As for your own plants, grow as hot and dry as you know how and spare the water that you doubtless give. There can be little doubt that this is the foodstuff of your iguana, and I suspect the foliage will serve his turn as well as the fruit. The plant I judge to be annual and of easy increase. Mature, it should be some three to four feet high, but it is evidently a case of 'soon ripe, soon rotten', and I expect to see it wither immediately after the fruit has ripened. One may presume to say that, where it appears to have come from, the conditions are subject to heat of extreme character."

Felix read the words to Norah at breakfast and commented upon them.

"Sir Humphrey confirms my own experience," he declared. "I have evidently been too lavish with water and given my seeds too rich soil. It would seem to be a desert plant. But a significant conclusion arises from this discovery. If time and growth proceed at a different rate of progress in the herb from any that we recognize and the whole procedure of its life is probably compassed with such brevity, then it is a reasonable deduction that the lizard also will reach maturity within far less time than any species that we know."

"You can see it happening," she answered. "I watched him yesterday—I meant to tell you and forgot it. One thing is certain. He isn't going on all fours much longer. He is like a baby learning to walk. He gets up on his hind-legs and totters along; then he falls; then he gets up again and holds the dead twigs you put in; and presently he begins to toddle again. And how he looks at you!"

"You should have mentioned this sooner," declared Felix. "It doesn't surprise me. If the thing is feeling out in its body, it may be similarly feeling out in its mind. It grows very quickly, and should it actually possess mind, then very definite duties lie before us. But they will be attended with extraordinary difficulties."

"Why?" she asked. "If there is something to be called reason hidden in that great head—something more than animal instinct—why should it be harder to teach it than any other bright child?"

"For this reason," he replied, "that it lacks the senses of a human infant. Needless to say, I have studied its growing capabilities very carefully, but we can only proceed on our own knowledge of the senses. I have no understanding concerning any others than those with which we are ourselves endowed. Others there well may be and probably are. Animals and insects reveal senses, the nature and purpose of which we cannot tell. But this lizard lacks two of our own very vital senses, both essential to education in any shape at a first thought. The creature is absolutely tame and trustful. It allows me to handle it and it will sit in my lap and hold my watch-chain in its little hands and mark the dial for minutes together. But it is deaf and dumb. It can make no sound of any kind and, while amazingly sensitive to vibration, is stone deaf, as we say. With such limitations one can only hope that nothing to be called reasoning powers develop."

"There's a technique for teaching deaf-and-dumb children," suggested his sister, "but perhaps it will be better if the necessity doesn't arise. You might discover that it has other gifts to atone for this state of things."

"Meantime it grows and eats heartily," he said. "The succulent leaves of the solanum rejoice it, and I have no fear that the lack of fruit jelly, which is now nearly finished, will be felt. We can furnish something equally full of vitamins from our own fruits, and the tomato, or whatever it may be, that came with it will soon be ripe. The creature will not eat

anything likely to do it harm. I am trying him with lettuce and half a peach this morning."

"And arrange something for him to sit on," urged Norah. "I've got a sort of feeling that he's made to sit, just as we are, in fact. He might be more comfortable so. Once you get used to his stumpy little figure and immense head, you cannot but admire him. His eyes are like moonstones and his colours grow brighter and brighter every day."

"The mystery is to know why in the name of fortune the creatures that control its world should have packed it off to another," mused Felix.

"I'm afraid he won't be able to throw any light on that," she answered, "however sharp he may turn out to be. Probably you might find a way to teach him tricks, though one can hardly suppose you can teach him anything else. I never heard of a performing lizard before, and I don't suppose you ever did."

"There is nothing I detest more than the mentality that teaches animals to do tricks," he answered. "A most debased and debasing business, and had I the power to forbid it, I should do so."

The lizard showed no fear of any among those who visited it, but inspected them gravely and with a sort of dignity. It would fix its eyes upon them and watch their movements; but it could not hear their voices, though in some fashion it began dimly to understand their attitude of mind.

Norah explained this.

"I believe it is beginning to read our faces," she said. "There's nothing it can't see, and it may have a sort of sense to tell it that our expressions generally reveal our feelings. Some visitors hate it and think it hideous. Some smile at it and admire it and look kind. The scientists have 'poker' faces, as you'd expect, and all seem merely to regard it as a deformed lizard. Even if it were, a decent soul would feel pity for it; but you are the only scientist with a spark of human pity that I ever saw, except Dr. Wilson. He loves our lizard and doesn't believe he's deformed, but quite the contrary. And when he came, the creature liked him and sat on his lap and climbed on his shoulder and played with his hair."

"When I brought 'Rex' to see him," said Felix, "the dog detested him, bristled, showed his teeth and bayed furiously. He couldn't hear 'Rex', but he had no difficulty in perceiving that he was far from a success in the Great Dane's opinion."

Norah found a stout little chair which stood but five inches off the ground and Felix inserted it into the lizard's glass cage. The result was something of a shock, for the creature rose, crept to it and sat down with every sign of satisfaction.

"There!" she cried. "What a change! Now you can see in a moment he is built for sitting as I always told you."

Still the professor hesitated.

"It may be no more than an imitative instinct," he argued. "It has seen me sit in the chair beside it hundreds of times and may have tried to copy me and recognized the use of the little chair."

Within another week, however, it appeared that all doubts were resolved. During this time the lizard ate heartily of fruit, lettuce and its own special plant. Plenty of leaves had been sent from Kew and there came a report that the fruits had grown ripe. They were of beetroot colour and as large as big oranges. Then came a day when Felix returned pale and shaking to his luncheon, ate but little, helped himself to a brandy and soda and waited impatiently for the butler to withdraw.

When Peters was gone Norah spoke.

"What's happened?" she asked. "You're looking ghastly. You stop in that hot-house far too much and it's bad for you. You're white as a sheet and your hands are shaking. Shall I send for Wilson?"

"A terrific thing has happened," he said weakly. "An experience that confounds all experience and plunges me into a sea of difficulties. I am too old—too old to face this tremendous challenge. It ought to have happened to a younger man."

"Not at all, Felix," she answered firmly. "I hate that defeatist tone of voice and am very angry with you for using it. Nothing will ever happen to you that you are not very well endowed to cope with. If you feel ill, say so and we will telephone for Dr. Wilson to come and make you well again, which he is amply competent to do, no doubt; but if you're all right, then everything is all right; and if you had the faith in Providence that I have, you would not talk about being too

old for any challenge, however tremendous it might be."

"The lizard," he said. "The lizard is conscious! It possesses reason and henceforth has just as ample rights as any human infant. It has ceased to be an animal, save in the scientific sense that we all are, and demands precisely the same respect and nurture as any other waif left upon our doorstep."

Norah was always calm under any provocation and preserved admirable self-control while she replied.

"Nothing would have surprised me less, my dear. In fact I have been expecting this for a week. So have you. With that stupendous forehead and those eyes, you only need to put a pair of glasses on his face to make him look as wise as you do yourself. What is there terrific or shattering about it? Two things instantly suggest themselves to me. He must have proper quarters—a day nursery and a night nursery and toys to play with. That's the first thing; and as he is evidently growing up so fast, we must set about the business of educating him. Of course we haven't the faintest idea what sort of education he would have got from the people in his own country. But we can certainly give him the benefits of sound home training. My own belief is that he will learn quite fast if we don't put too much strain upon him, and prove quite a clever boy."

"One thing is certain: that his education cannot begin too soon, and I invite your aid in details," replied Felix. "I have noticed that he will often sit on my shoulder and watch me as I read and turn over the pages of a book. He is not rendered impatient by this process and seems to understand that I gain advantages from it denied to him."

"Once we teach him to read, there is no saying how fast his brain will develop," she answered. "Something in the nature of the kindergarten system, I should think. You show him objects and let him handle them. Then you show him the symbols of the objects in the shape of words. Thus, having learned the alphabet, he comes to associate the things with their names. Of course, being deaf, the difficulties are much greater, because sound will not enter into his education."

"The attempt must be made. He certainly won't oppose it for he manifests remarkable interest in all that he sees. You have not asked what upset me to-day; but I will tell you. The first of the new fruit was ripe and bursting with its own fatness, so I took a plate, cut it up and placed it before him after opening the cage. He approached it, smelled the musky odour and, taking a piece in his right hand, squatted down by the plate and ate a slice with utmost satisfaction. Then he reflected, picked up a second slice, rose on his hind legs, waddled across to me and offered it to me! I nodded and smiled as one would to a kindly child, and he nodded and watched what I would do. I took it from him and put it to my mouth. It was sweet, sugary, obviously bursting with vitamins, but exceedingly uninteresting. I consumed it and he was satisfied. Then he went and fetched me another piece, not stopping to eat again himself. I shook my head and he shook his head! Then he returned to the plate and finished everything with great gusto."

"The poor scrap has got a heart," said Norah.

"That was not all," continued Felix. "Having fed, he rambled about among the pot plants and pulled out the labels and looked at the labels as though he were reading them, then he put them back. He has done that before, and he stood some time at the window looking out as he has often done before. He watched Medland pass with a wheelbarrow and showed great interest in it, and he watched the birds. Then happened the extraordinary thing. He came to me, sat in my lap and took my watch out of my pocket as he likes to do. He has studied the dial many times and it interests him far more than anything else. And now I come to the staggering powers of the creature. Interested in my book, I forgot the time, but he was perfectly conscious of it. He must know that, when it is one o'clock, I take the watch from him, put him back in his cage and repair to the house. It is evidently clear to him that, when the hands of the watch reach a certain position, I get up and go away. He does not hear the luncheon-gong that summons me, but he perceives that on the minute-hand reaching twelve and the hour-hand standing at one, it is a signal to me to depart. This has happened often and been recorded by his observation. Now to-day, immersed in my 'proofs', I did not hear the gong and was oblivious to time; but he knew and patted my waistcoat with one hand and held up the watch with the other. I nodded, put the watch in my pocket, shut him up and returned to the house."

For once Mrs. Hapgood permitted herself to be astonished.

"Good powers!" she exclaimed. "If he has got as far as that without any education whatever, he must have an extraordinary brain. A human baby couldn't do anything of that kind."

"We cannot consider him relatively," answered the professor, "and from the first must not attempt to argue from the

criterion of a human baby. All we know is that the lizards in some other planet than our own have reached to a sort of self-consciousness and reasoning power; but exactly what form reasoning has taken and what shape it may take on the maturity of the creature remains to be discovered. We cannot trace any analogy with our own kind. We cannot even talk of him as a baby, because we do not know how he stands to time, or how long it may take him to 'grow up', as we say."

"He is two months old according to our time," said Norah.

"Exactly, but we know not what two months may represent as a proportion of his probable age. We don't know where he stands, or the extent of his mental development. We know that he lives and grows infinitely faster than ourselves, just as the plant which he brought with him lives and grows. He certainly is far short of a mature iguana as yet; but the reasoning power that can read a watch and associate the hour of one o'clock with my movements is far beyond that of any infant mind in our experience."

"I've finished his little coat," said Mrs. Hapgood. "It is warm, woolly and soft. It won't hurt him. He let me try it on and didn't mind at all. He never minds anything. You'd think, with such a brain, he would have his likes and dislikes by this time."

"One cannot presume to say. He may have a brain above likes and dislikes as we understand the word. He represents an order of intelligence of which we have no knowledge, sent here from a world of which he can have no knowledge. Thus we are utterly unable to guess how our wisdom will appeal to him and equally unable to imagine the sort of wisdom that would have awaited him in his own environment."

"That's going to be puzzling—both for him and us," admitted Norah. "However, we must do the best we can. He can't teach us anything, unfortunately, because if you leave your home town, so to say, in the shape of an egg, you won't be able to tell other people much about it, even if they take the trouble to hatch you and bring you up in the way they think you should go. So we return to the problem of what we should teach him and how much he is equal to learning. He might not have any use for our education, though you'd judge that a conscious lizard was hardly likely to be so well endowed with intellect as a conscious human being."

"That doesn't follow at all," he answered. "You may, however, be right, in which case we are faced with another possibility, which this iguana will not be able to clear up. Whence he comes there may possibly be more than one conscious order of living creatures. The reasoning powers that made and despatched the bolt were emphatically of a kind superior to our own in certain scientific directions. Those unknown beings know more than we do and manufactured something which we could not have done. They doubtless understood that it was not possible to travel in that way themselves, and so despatched an iguana in the egg as the most likely messenger to reach us safely. On the other hand, it may actually be a lizard world from which he has come, and they have sent us a scion of a good family—the product of worthy and intelligent parents."

Norah laughed, because Felix was so serious.

"If Professor Linklater heard you, he would say that too much learning had made you mad, my dear. The one bright thing is to think how you will score off him next time you read a paper. Meanwhile our little friend's cloak is finished and I think we must make the experiment of taking him into the garden if to-morrow is a really hot day. He longs to go. There ought to be a perambulator hired."

"Quite needless," he said. "He will quickly outgrow anything of that kind and can walk quite steadily and sturdily now. If we each take a hand and go slowly, he will be all right."

"One can't of course advertise for a nursemaid for an iguana," said Mrs. Hapgood.

Custom and force of habit made his friends often address the new-comer although they knew that he could not hear them; but the difference between him and a human baby was very remarkable and Mrs. Hapgood observed it with feminine competence long before the professor was able to do so.

"We're very apt to babble to babies, though we know quite well they have no idea what we're talking about," she told him. "They hear us, but, of course, cannot tell what the noises mean; yet in some weird way, though the lizard hears nothing, he does sometimes react as though he did know what we are talking about."

"Another mystery," sighed Felix.

They were just preparing to take the little creature on his first walk abroad, for the late August day was exceedingly hot and no wind blew.

"Now you're coming to see the garden, little man," announced Norah, and the lizard appeared to anticipate his adventure happily enough. Felix endeavoured to explain this fact, but failed, in his sister's opinion.

"He sees the coat," he said, "and associates it in some way with going out."

"Impossible," she answered. "After to-day he will no doubt associate it with going out and welcome it accordingly, but as yet he cannot know what it means."

"He must not stop out long," he declared. "He is accustomed to the temperature of his glass-house. We must watch him narrowly, for the outer air is many degrees cooler and he may not be able to breathe it with comfort."

They took him out between them in his little coat and walked slowly. His eyes were everywhere and he appeared to suffer no inconvenience. 'Sally' was pulling the mowing-machine and they marched him up to her. Felix patted the old horse, and the iguana, who now stood two feet high, regarded the mare with watchful observance, but showed no fear. Then he turned his attention to the mowing-machine and revealed considerably greater interest. He touched it, ran his tiny fingers over it and presently watched it working and perceived its purpose. Anon they visited a sunk garden and a pond, where pink-and-white water-lilies grew in profusion; but the goldfish, not the plants, interested him most and he watched them for some time. He touched the water and shivered and held his hand up for Norah to dry it. Presently they took him to a garden seat in the sun and set him down between them. He looked up at them; then his eyes shut and he went to sleep. They had been out for half an hour and he was clearly very tired. Norah picked him up, but he did not waken, and they carried him to his apartment, removed his coat and left him sleeping.

"The first thing is to arrange proper quarters and a proper bed for him," she said. "He must have a great deal more consideration."

"I design to build a house for him against the west wall," answered Felix. "I have already sketched the plans and propose to submit them to you to-night. One has to look ahead. The cage will soon be too small. I judge that he has now attained to about half his adult size. Then he will probably stand about four to five feet tall and his accommodation must be proportionate."

That night after dinner he submitted his ideas and Norah modified them in certain particulars, but for the most part approved. She faced the situation with greater courage than Felix, for something in the nature of his extraordinary experience often tended to cast him down and this great discovery had troubled his nerves and left him considerably depressed.

"I think it is the strain upon my imagination," he said. "Had I possessed imagination, I might better have faced this ordeal; but when suddenly a terrific demand arises for gifts which you lack, the result upon your intellect is painful and may even prejudice physical health."

"You'll soon get accustomed to him and feel too interested to think about yourself," she said.

"The interest is of course prodigious," he admitted; "but certain inevitable features of what lies before—not only us, but the iguana himself—are perplexing and frankly rather depressing. I am thinking of him now—not in any sense sentimentally, but from the standpoint of science. I am asking myself what possible advantage can accrue to earth from the lizard's advent, or how those who sent him imagined they were going to win any advantage from doing so. Some impulse must have prompted them and it is difficult to see whether they imagined they were doing us a good turn by despatching him, or whether they expect themselves to be the gainers."

"He may be able to throw some light upon himself when he grows up," suggested Norah; but the professor explained that such a hope was vain.

"Ask yourself how. The iguana comes to us as an embryo, totally ignorant of everything. He brings no information whatever and can never know more than he is able to learn from us and his own observation. Objectively he must be as every other new-born animal. There is only one hope: that subjectively, through the channels of his ancestry, he may possess instincts that will appear in action and so, presently, inform us of the reasons why he was despatched. Those who sent him can have possessed no knowledge whatever as to us, or how we should welcome or receive him. They

cannot have known, for example, whether it would lie in our power to open the bolt or reach him at all. He was fired at a venture and it is impossible that those responsible for him knew that there were conscious creatures waiting to receive him on earth."

"You can't say it's impossible," argued Norah. "That is to assume that nobody in the universe knows any more about us than we know about them. We can only bring our limited wits to the problem; but, though doubtless limited too, the beings that sent him may have more sense than ourselves and know plenty of things that we do not."

"I grant that," agreed Felix, "but on the other hand, they must be exceedingly limited in their outlook and totally devoid of much common sense that we can claim. Suppose that we had learned how to construct and fire a projectile with such accuracy that we knew it must reach our nearest neighbour, the moon. Should we have been content to put into it——"

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Hapgood. "Now you are approaching the question from a human standpoint, darling, and finding purely human objections and suggestions. We couldn't have sent them a self-conscious lizard, because we haven't got such a thing. We should have thought of something quite different, of course. But as we didn't know how to start, that doesn't matter. They did know how to start and reach us, which argues to my mind they already knew something about us."

"The iguana cannot tell us whether they do or not in any case," replied Felix.

"You have no right to say what he can or cannot tell us, until we start on his education and give him a chance," she answered. "If he has no more sense than most of us, then I grant he won't be very useful; but if he happens to possess hereditary gifts that put him ahead of us in some way, then he may be valuable."

But Felix was quite unconvinced.

"I argue from the meagre contents of the bolt," he declared again. "Creatures of high comprehension would have done far more. Their scientific powers are apparent, but that is all we can grant them. It was a beggarly gift and quite devoid of imagination. Consider, for example, what light on their civilization a roll of photographs would have given us. Thus we should have seen their actual shapes, their habitations and a thousand other illuminating things."

"That's true," admitted Norah. "They evidently don't know anything about photography; but there may be good reasons for that."

Brother and sister argued to no purpose and Norah presently retired.

"Well," she concluded, "I can't cheer you up, darling, and you can't cast me down, so I will go to bed. To-morrow I begin the lizard's education, and though his friends can't make pictures, we shall probably find that he is quite capable of understanding them."

CHAPTER VII

Norah's confident hopes suffered disappointment in one particular, and when she and her brother met at luncheon some few days later it was Mrs. Hapgood who found herself a little pensive. She spoke of other things during the meal, mentioned a letter from Mildred and regretted that she seemed to be seeing a great deal of the Russian attaché.

"Nothing would please me less than an alliance of that sort," she declared. "The Russians have always been our natural enemies, and our present friendship is utterly unholy, in my opinion. Why do we have anything to do with people whose secret ambition is to ruin us and flood the world with their godless opinions?"

"Commerce demands that we bow the knee to them," explained Felix. "Big business' and the prosperity it may bring to our working classes is the all-important consideration. We overlook their avowed principles for the sake of trade. But one sees how these political moves often bear Dead Sea fruit. The cynical might smile to reflect that it was Germany who suffered Lenin and his friends to enter Russia. And now it is Germany who cries out loudest about the monster at her elbow."

"Germany needn't pretend to be frightened," declared Mrs. Hapgood. "Russia loses all her wars as a matter of course, and the last thing she dreams about is any attack on the Germans. Russians are not a warlike people. Germany is the hornets' nest; Germany is ruining all the other nations by creating the necessity to arm against her. If there is to be any more fighting on earth, only Germany will begin it."

"Do not worry yourself, my love. Tell me of your morning's experience," he begged.

"Well," she said. "Of course, if you're going to start out to teach, you must also start out to learn. I can't say that I've taught our little friend much so far, but I have begun to learn something about him. One channel from which I had hoped a good deal is done for. I took a volume of your classic to show him—that including the iguana family with the beautiful coloured plates of them—and I'm sorry to say it meant nothing whatever to him. He doesn't understand pictures any better than any other animal. You might as well have shown it to 'Rex' or 'Sally'."

"Animals have never learned to understand pictures; but, given reason, the young quickly understand them as a rule," he said.

"I know. Quite small babies understand them. But he didn't in the least."

"It gives us a line, and perhaps explains the lack of pictures in the shell."

"On the other hand he appeared to perceive what was infinitely more advanced and difficult," she continued. "I showed him the alphabet; then I showed him some large print of words in one syllable and pointed to the letters in the alphabet as forming the words. This interested him and kept him quiet. He was sitting in my lap at the time, and presently he discriminated, pointed at the letter in the alphabet and then pointed to it in the one-syllable words. Had one been able to sound them he would have got on quite fast; but I believe he is naturally studious. I took him a clockwork mouse and a lot of small toys that I bought in the village. He looked at each and handled it; but the clockwork mouse was the one he stuck to. I wound it up and let it run twice. Then he wound it up and let it run. When he got drowsy he took it to bed with him and went to sleep with it between his hands."

"The bent may be mechanical," thought Felix. "Probably the mechanical arts are far advanced among those who sent him."

"Perhaps their idea was that his inherited genius will develop and teach us how to communicate with them," she suggested.

"If so, a senseless idea," he answered, "for the reason that we have no knowledge of where they may be. And that he cannot know any more than we do."

"We don't know what he knows yet," she said. "But it isn't going to be a very slow business finding out. He eats enormously and his head seems to grow bigger every day."

A week later the home of the lizard was in course of erection and he went sometimes to watch it growing. It seemed that he understood in some mysterious fashion that it was connected with him and he had responded readily to other

immediate contrivances for his comfort. He sat at a low table provided for him and took his meals upon it. He handled a spoon and when his hands became wet with fruit juice, he wiped them on a small napkin. When he was tired, he went to a little bed and drew up an eider-down quilt about him before he slept.

"Before all else he must have warmth," explained Mrs. Hapgood. "He can't be too hot, but he hates the cold, as far as one can say he hates anything."

"He neither loves nor hates," declared Felix. "He is as yet too young to display emotion; but I feel confident we are going to find that he is passionless. Reason has either outstripped our reactions to feeling in his case and no doubt in his race, or else consciousness has proceeded on other lines and created a being independent of good or evil."

"We can't imagine such a being," she answered, but he saw no impossibility.

"We can imagine such a being," he replied, "because the world is full of such beings; but we find it difficult, of course, to imagine a conscious being ignorant either of goodness or badness. Knowledge of the one entails recognition of the other, but it is not beyond the scope of even my scant imagination to suppose a creature evolved to a height of consciousness along lines where neither good nor evil had any meaning."

Norah, however, failed to comprehend such a creature.

"He is exceedingly good so far," she said. "He is naturally good, like many children; but he must have some of the old Adam in him somewhere. If he were never naughty, he would be a monster."

"Only from our point of view," explained the professor. "Anything that exceeds our experience we are too apt to call a monster at once. I myself on first seeing him supposed him to be deformed, because he was unlike those iguanas to which I have accustomed myself. Now I know that his seeming deformity was a brain—vast by comparison with the brain of our terrestrial lizards. Our minds are swiftly trained to accept reality when confronted with it; and what I thought monstrous, I now perceive to be seemly and inevitable. Consciousness demands a brain, and a skilled biologist might have read the possibilities that such a head foretold far better than did we."

The lizard's house was built largely of glass for his dwelling-room and treated with a system of hot-water pipes throughout. Norah no longer talked of a day and night nursery, because it was apparent that the visitor already began to grow out of childhood. He proved absolutely amenable and revealed to an increasing and puzzling extent a foreknowledge of what they wished and a willingness to obey.

"He'll explain it some day, when he has learned to write," promised Norah. "That is the only way in which he can ever communicate his wishes and opinions to us, but I am certain he has some means of gathering our wishes and opinions already. There are many things it's no good trying to teach him, but there are other things that he is learning far faster than any normal child possibly could."

She had placed paper before the iguana and written words upon it, and she had provided him with a small pencil and invited him to do the like. The pencil had proved by far his greatest interest. It shared his supreme attachment with the clockwork mouse and other mechanical toys. He was learning the meaning of words and the construction of sentences. In truth he promised very soon to be able to read. Felix watched over his studies and himself essayed an attempt to see if figures would be likely to lie in the lizard's power. The result amazed him, for it was clear that the creature already possessed a mentality capable of receiving the principles of arithmetic.

"He grasped the numerals with astounding rapidity," declared the professor. "He took his pencil and copied them after I had written them down. Then I set 'one' above 'one', drew a line and put a 'two' beneath. He watched with the deepest attention. Then I set 'one' with 'two' above, drew a line and wrote a 'three' beneath; and so on. Presently I put 'four' above 'one', drew a line and gave him the pencil. He reflected for a moment, then wrote a tiny 'five'! I nodded, he nodded. I believe he perceived that I was gratified, but cannot be certain as to that. Our emotions, which are so readily understood by a growing child, because he already begins to share them, will be much harder for the iguana to fathom, because in all probability he can never share them. Anger or pleasure are likely to mean nothing to him; but being conscious, he must sooner or later reflect, and as all reflection means wonder, he will be conscious of wonder and doubtless inquire the meaning of the different expressions that light our faces under different mental or physical conditions. Thus he will put two and two together and glean whether we are feeling troubled, or amused, or happy and content."

"A dog can do that," said Norah.

"He can; but the lizard will go deeper. We may find him worthy of confidence and capable of realizing some of our difficulties and problems—our aches and pains of mind and body in this strange world; but what I think far more probable is that he will prove quite incapable of understanding them, since they belong to a being so completely outside the experience of his race. If he is neither good nor bad, he cannot be expected to show any sympathy for, or great interest in, a being largely under the sway of circumstances where good or bad predominate and are in ceaseless opposition. He may take a scientific interest in us, as we take in him; but I suspect his inherited instincts will preclude any power to share either our hopes, ambitions or disabilities."

"He's going to be enthusiastic about knowledge," declared Mrs. Hapgood. "At least, he shows what we should call 'enthusiasm'. I don't know, of course, what he would call it. He's learning to read and write, and you say he's going to learn to do sums. That's pretty good for a start, and when he once finds out the subjects that interest him most and can tell us what they are, then we shall be able to help him a great deal."

"Books will be his stronghold, and out of books he may in time excite his mind to some useful purpose," hoped Felix. "He is more intelligent than I expected. His brain I judge to be made of finer spun and more exquisitely constructed fabric than our own. He can, of course, only acquire such knowledge as we are able to provide for him; but, on the basis of that knowledge, it is possible that he may advance and reach to higher results and clearer vision than most of us, just as outstanding human beings have done. It seems a grotesque suggestion and I should not venture on anything so wild save to you. But for you, my love, as you know well, I reserve speculations and flights of fancy that would be unseemly and awake suspicion in less kindly ears."

"I know. I should hate it if you never broke loose with me," she said. "Nobody understands you half as well as I do, and I know, with scientists, you can't do anything more than creep along and watch your step, like a cat on a wall. They're cowardly and frightened of everything that is worth while. The lizard may come from a purely scientific world—in which case God help him. I suppose you'll read another paper about him soon?"

"I design a paper at the autumn meeting of the Zoological Society," he answered. "I have warned them, and scepticism is rife, as you would expect it to be; but certain men are coming to see him soon and they cannot fail to recognize the extraordinary truth. They will probably have many suggestions to make; but I am disposed to wait until the lizard himself is capable of hearing how we stand and the possibilities that the scientific world has to offer him. It must be impressed upon him that he is free to do as he will and determine his future actions according to his native bent. He must doubtless have some sort of character and will let us know its nature when he is competent to do so."

"He may have no more character than a sewing-machine," argued Norah. "He may have immense brains and prodigious powers of learning, but no initiative whatever and nothing to get hold of in the way of character."

"How did he like the house?" asked Felix, for that morning Mrs. Hapgood had brought the lizard into Applewood and shown him the apartments, writing down the names for him to read as she went from room to room.

"He was attentive and observant," she answered. "When we went from the drawing-room into the aviary, he watched the budgerigars for some time, but, of course, you never know what he is thinking. Two things interested him particularly in your study: the almanac with the big figures which hangs on the wall—I believe he loves figures if he loves anything—and the big globe of the world in the corner. He was greatly taken with that. I wrote 'The Earth', and he nodded and turned the globe round. Then I pointed to the blue and wrote 'Sea' and to the continents and wrote 'Land'. And I'm sure he understood."

"If his strong suit is mathematics," said Felix, "then it will be necessary to hire a tutor for him, because no subject exists of which I know so little."

"We mustn't kill him with work, however," declared Norah. "I was wondering if it will prove possible presently to teach him to play games. No outdoor games, of course; but indoor games—dominoes, perhaps, or cards, or even chess."

"I very much doubt if he will have any use whatever for games," answered Felix. "He is not naturally playful. I should describe him as serious-minded, if we can apply any human adjective to him. Games would be likely to bore him as waste of time. I can conceive it possible that we might sink in his estimation if we tried to teach him a pastime of any kind."

"Perhaps we might," she admitted. "Of course, he may be able to tell us presently what he thinks of us, and it will be very interesting to know, and still more so to find whether he is capable of gratitude, or affection, or anything of that sort."

"You mustn't expect it," warned Felix. "Tender emotions may, of course, awaken; but he is not a creature of instinct and familiar through a long heredity with man. Dogs evince affection and something closely akin to gratitude; but the iguana has no ancestral memories of us, and what his reason may lead him to conclude from a merely personal experience remains to be seen. It may be that, as in Holy Writ, the seed of the serpent will bruise the human heel if equal to the task."

"Don't imagine anything of the sort," she said. "I'm sure he won't want to bruise anybody. To begin with, he is not a serpent. It seems almost rude to call him even a reptile. He is a conscious young person with a keen intellect and naturally good manners. When he grows older and hears his extraordinary history as far as we know it, he cannot fail to see how nice we have been and what a tremendous lot of trouble we have taken on his account. Then he will realize his obligations and never do anything to make us anxious and worry us."

"It may be so," he said. "I should guess that he will naturally be attracted by the subject of his own origin and starting-place."

"I believe he'll prove much too sensible to bother about them," she answered. "Those he can never know."

"But his theories might be highly instructive," thought Felix, "though it is impossible to tell as yet whether he will appreciate our theories."

"You are looking too far ahead," declared his sister. "We must be fair to him. The whole of our system of education might be utterly wrong from his point of view. We have a great deal to learn about what is going on in his own head, and my feeling is that until he has mastered reading and writing, so that he can communicate with us, we ought not to try and cram him."

But the lizard's thirst for knowledge appeared insatiable, and it was clear that he would soon get into touch with mankind. Words now interested him above all else, and he would sit for hours turning over the pages of a dictionary and copying them with the little pencil provided. Norah wrote for him in the simplest language at her command and she soon found that he was beginning to read easily. Then Felix bought a typewriter, which proved a source of immense interest to the student, and in an astonishingly short time he understood the machine and was able to use it. Still he strangely anticipated the words they now wrote and the directions they were apt to give him; but the discovery to which this curious fact led presently formed an important part of the professor's next paper upon him and will be recorded there.

An oculist of note examined the iguana's eyes and ascertained amazing properties in these organs that Felix was also able to announce. The creature advanced in knowledge with startling speed, showing rare aptitude for certain subjects and complete indifference and lack of perception concerning others. His health continued excellent, but he cared very little for exercise and did not appear to need it. When his habitation was completed, he took up his new quarters with evident satisfaction and much appreciated the high temperature that central heating provided. He showed method and kept regular hours; but he was disposed to sleep more by day than night and pursued his studies long after everybody else but the owls had gone to bed. He comprehended the electric light quickly and learned to turn it off and on, but he did not depend upon it and was evidently able to read in the dark when he desired to do so. A glassed passage-way joined the lizard's dwelling to Applewood and an electric bell, rung from his sitting-room, sounded in the professor's. The meaning of this was explained to him, and he had now reached a height of apprehension when he could understand this and much else. He still wrote, but turned more and more to the typewriter and began to use it with precision and speed. Indeed he showed a lizard quickness of hand and foot, and though, as summer waned, he ceased to go out, he moved rapidly from one apartment to another and slept much less than formerly. They abandoned the business of feeding him at stated times but left a large glass salver of mixed fruit at his elbow, with plates, spoons and a small silver knife and fork. Having seen Norah use these things he grasped their purpose and ate in very orderly fashion. He drank very little and only water. Felix tried him with milk and weak tea and coffee, but he rejected all of these. Fruit and green salads amply sufficed him, and when dried fruits were added to his table he welcomed them, and ate date, fig and raisin.

Then came a time of increased advance and a remarkable discovery. Felix's note-book was already bulging, and many other savants had visited the iguana and found themselves able to converse with him and read the replies that he wrote or typed. He now knew as much as the average secondary schoolboy and ceased not to study at all times. He revealed no

inclination to amuse himself, and his sole occupations were eating, sleeping and reading the books provided; but his tastes had now become definite and determined, and his subjects of interest were limited to three. For these he displayed a huge appetite and remarkable powers of memory. From elementary works he passed to primers and text-books, and for the most part had educated himself entirely by reading; but an accomplished young mathematician was engaged from Redchester and the iguana proved astonishingly adept.

Mildred Hapgood came to spend a week-end with her mother before Professor Toddleben went to London, and the lizard welcomed her with his usual courtesy. She experienced a new sensation and reported the beginning of his own original theories.

"Naturally," she told her uncle, after an hour with their visitor, "he thinks first of himself. He is reading all about us in his books, but they can't tell him anything about himself. I asked him what the idea was behind his arrival, and I found that he had thought it out. One approaches him entirely through the channel of mind, and he understands and answers through the channel of writing, which is the only possible one he has got. And he wrote this."

Mildred read from a typed sheet she had brought back with her.

"The reason may be that my fellow creatures, seeing earth with their telescopes, thought that it was inhabited by conscious lizards like themselves. The idea of anything but a lizard being conscious probably never struck them. They may not imagine there are any other creatures in the solar system but lizards. Or, assuming that there are mammals in their world, they are possibly of such a kind that the thought of reason in connection with them would not arise."

"Then I asked him where he imagined that his world was likely to be," continued Mildred, "and he wrote how this was the very question he was hoping to answer when he knew how. He seemed pretty sure that he would find out some day."

"That conscious lizards like himself may have despatched him, and not some other being as we imagined, is quite feasible," declared Felix. "Nay, it is reasonable, and they probably thought, as he suggests, that he would find himself in a new world tenanted by his own species."

"They surely wouldn't have sent him if they had realized how deadly lonely he was going to be," suggested his niece.

"How do you like him—just for himself!" asked Mrs. Hapgood, and Milly shrugged her shoulders.

"You can't like him, or dislike him, any more than you like, or dislike, the multiplication table," she said. "He's a machine without any human attributes whatever. You know that he's got a mind hidden away somewhere, but it's built on quite a different plan from ours. I expect his dreadful country is all machine-made and too boring for words. I tried a human touch. You can't flirt with him, of course, but I was slightly coy. However, you might as well be coy with the village pump."

"You forget that he isn't six months old," said Norah.

"Naturally, because time is something utterly different to him than it is to us," answered the girl. "We don't know how old he really is."

"I should judge him to be about five-and-twenty of our years," declared the professor. "At which rate," he added, "when he attains the age of two, should he live to do so, he will be a hundred."

Milly made another interesting remark.

"I said that he ought to be called something definite, because it would be more respectful," she told them. "I said: 'We can't call you a human name exactly, because to call you "Charles", or "Henry", or "Thomas" would be absurd and also rather rude. Have you any idea what you would wish to be called?' He had actually thought of it himself!"

"Most interesting," declared Norah. "And what did he suggest?"

A perfect name, as you would expect from such an orderly creature. He said, "I am a saurian. Therefore let me be called 'Saurus'. Not 'Mister Saurus', or 'Professor Saurus', or 'Sir Saurus', after the earthly manner, but just 'Saurus'."

"So we will," promised Mrs. Hapgood, and Felix approved.

CHAPTER VIII

Mildred enjoyed scraps of conversation with Saurus before she returned to London and was able to report a few interesting incidents, all tending to show how swiftly his intelligence began to grow.

"For one thing," she said, "of course, he knocks all our cut-and-dried notions of time side-wise. Time moves on an utterly different plane with him, and no doubt he and his blessed tomato prefer their own quick time to our jog-trot pace."

"Both are under the dominion of their own time," explained Felix, "and though it is impossible to make biological experiments with him, already they are trying hard at Kew to cross the extra-terrestrial 'tomato', as you call it, with our own varied species of solanum. As yet, however, they have failed."

"I tried him on art," said Mildred, "and he was amazingly large-minded. Art means nothing to him and he doesn't understand the first word about it; and yet he seems to perceive what it may mean for creatures like us. He said that the business of making pictures and statues seems futile to him, just as the business of making noises, which we call music, would be futile to him if he could hear them. In the same way to read stories of things that might have happened but never did, and of people who might have existed but never did, seems utterly childish. Fiction is a wash-out from his point of view; while for men and women to dress up and pretend to be somebody else, which we call the drama, merely puzzles him. But he admits that, though probably not any use to his people, art must be valuable to us, or we shouldn't have discovered it. That's where his large-mindedness came in. He wrote this in his tiny handwriting. He writes already far faster than we can, but it is quite clear. I've kept it to show my friends."

She brought a sheet of paper from her pocket and read to them.

"Art seems to be greater than science in some ways," wrote Saurus. "Your artists make things. They are creators and they hate war, which is their opposite, because it is a destroyer. Your science neither hates nor loves anything; therefore I understand science, because I neither hate nor love anything. Science is just as willing to advance war as to oppose it. To me war seems so terrible a thought that, for your sakes, I could wish science also thought it terrible. This indifference is opposed to much that I have discovered about your species, and it shows that the scientific mind is lacking in those qualities which would enable it to dominate earth and compose your deep differences. It is narrow and stark and frosty. If what you call "Art" could bring something to the help of science in this matter, then mankind might be the gainer. Of good, or evil, I know nothing, but I see their significance in human affairs and, could your art and science join forces, they would perhaps influence and aid each other to your advantage."

"Very sensible," declared Norah.

"As a matter of fact, art and science do appear to hate each other," said Mildred, "so nothing will make them friends."

"Does he ever talk about himself to you?" asked Felix. "He is very reticent on the subject to me, though now, since our great discovery, we communicate freely enough."

"No, uncle. You can only get glimpses of his queer character through his mind. Lots of things puzzle him; but nothing vexes him. He seems to feel, somehow, that human emotions are a pity. He wonders if we may not be mistaken in a great many of our performances. He would laugh at us sometimes—that is, if he ever laughed at anything. But, of course, he can't. About the only thing he will always be incapable of seeing is a joke. He said that reality no doubt existed, though quite beyond our reach; but he said that since we had discovered the existence of reality, which was a great feat in itself, our attitude to reality seemed imbecile, because we appear utterly to ignore it."

"He'll soon have us out of our depth," prophesied Norah. "He's going to be a monster, after all."

"If he's going to be a monster of reason to us, then we are going to be monsters of unreason to him," feared Felix. "The point of view is everything."

"We cannot say what he is, but we can say what he is not, in a guarded sort of way," argued Milly. "He is not unkindly; he is not opinionated; he is not unamiable; above all else, he is not unreasonable. But, of course, the more he sees of men and women the more he is bound to find that we are all these things and a great many more. So we can't expect him to feel that we are not far worse monsters than he is, anyway. He wrote a queer thing about that. He told me that if he had come laden with knowledge from his own world, he might have been some use to us; but the snag is that he didn't, and

the state of civilization in his own country is quite as much a secret from him as it must be from us."

"Everything turns on that," said Felix. "As it is, he can no more help us than a European baby could help Hottentots if committed to their charge; but I still venture to hope that his inherited instincts may develop and aid him to give us glimpses of other conditions than those we know."

"I'm afraid he doesn't expect anything like that," said Norah. "'I can never teach: I can only learn,' he told me yesterday. But he thought that no great matter, because the wisdom of a lizard world might only be folly to a mammal world. And, of course, vice versa. He reads philosophy and doesn't find it in the least dry. He feels that we already know enough to be good, but what we call 'evil' prevents this knowledge from getting into our heads and influencing our actions."

"He has given up reading history, because he says it is calculated to make him under-value us," explained Milly. "But fancy a person not six months old feeling so sorry that he'd never be able to teach us anything! Priceless, I call it. If he goes on at the rate he's going, teaching him what we know will soon be like playing elementary exercises on a concert 'grand'. A brain like his will be utterly wasted here."

"Not at all," declared Felix. "He must do some original thinking presently on the basis of our instruction. He may prove far more limited and devoid of originality than you suppose."

Mildred kept her own great item of news until the hour of her departure. She had no desire to argue about it, so timed her intelligence that argument would be impossible. Indeed, it was not until a motor car waited to carry her to the station that she spoke. Then she told them of her adventure.

"You will be interested to hear, mother, that Serge Boluski wants to marry me," she said. "I have not as yet decided."

But Norah knew better.

"You wouldn't have mentioned the matter at all if you were not decided," she answered, "and very well you know it, Milly. I can only pray you not to be in any hurry. You knew this was going to distress Uncle Felix and myself very much."

"I was afraid so, but you must try to bear up," begged Mildred. "I haven't decided yet, honour bright. I'll bring him down if we agree about it. And there's no need for either of you to be miserable, in any case, because he's a healthy, well-born man and comes from a distinguished family. Most of his relations were killed off in the Revolution. As for him, of course, I can't tell you his secrets, but he's not altogether what he seems. Naturally a diplomat wouldn't be."

Leaving uncle and mother with her disturbing news, the young woman kissed them both and went her way. Felix was the more troubled and began to wonder where he might glean secret light upon the Russian; but Norah declared them both powerless.

"It's a case of hoping for the best," she said. "We can do nothing, in any case. She is not a fool, and the young man may be a worthy member of society."

"One doubts, however, that he can be well born," sighed the professor. "Birth would surely be an irrevocable bar to any high office in Russia."

He was about to occupy himself with the forthcoming paper on Saurus, and during the next few weeks he compiled it and stated the position as it stood. But again and again it became necessary to make additions, because the iguana was now in a position to help him and add various theories to the facts at Toddleben's command.

At last, however, he stood before his peers and read his paper. There was no jeering now, because a great many eminent men had visited Applewood and made the acquaintance of the great lizard. He had become the paramount interest of science, though sceptics still existed who refused to accept the startling fact of his existence and believed that some cunning charlatanry must lie behind him. None, however, who had once visited him and perceived the existing means of communication any longer doubted.

It was concerning these channels of exchange that Felix first dwelt when he opened his address.

"The discovery was, of course, inevitable," he began, "and it has not only enabled us to arrive at a much more direct and ready understanding, but it serves to explain in no small measure what before was obscure. I often wondered whether

Saurus—by which name the iguana has elected to be called—I often wondered whether his deafness and dumbness were peculiar to himself, or defects, as we should call them, common to his species. I was disposed to suspect that his journey through space might account for certain injuries to substance which had thus robbed him of such vital senses; but now I find this was not the case, and he agrees with me that the conscious community of which he is one are undoubtedly deaf and dumb. Yet, none the less, they communicate in a manner that may be regarded as infinitely superior to our own. Thought is their channel, and as soon as Saurus was able to write, the secret appeared. We had been mystified by his power to anticipate our wishes and gather our purpose; but when he learned sufficient language to read the thoughts in our minds, then the mystery vanished.

"Thought obviously travels far quicker than sound or light. The process is instantaneous, and thoughts directed to Saurus possess his mind at the moment they are formed. They come into his head simultaneously with coming into ours. Man, however, cannot think without mental formation of words. We may think in one language, or we may think in another, but we think in terms of words, and one has only to attempt to think without this backbone of words to find the impossibility. Saurus, then, could not read our thoughts better than any other baby could read them until he had acquired language; and this he did through the medium of the printed page with incredible speed. That done, the machine began to function and his peculiar endowment of thought-reading enabled him to learn what was passing in our minds concerning himself. When we are not thinking of him, or directing him, or asking for information from him, he is not in touch with our minds and he cannot gather any thoughts or wishes we do not wish to impart to him; but if we would be in touch with him, we instantly become so, and it is thus without doubt that his people communicate. No spoken speech, of course, exists in a deaf-and-dumb world; but the medium of thought enables them to communicate and co-operate. We see something akin to this mysterious business in the insect world, and we notice how a flock of a thousand starlings will all warp and turn in mid-air with military precision and perfection of timing that can only come from some impulse, or instinct, beyond our comprehension. Similarly a shoal of fish will all dart or plunge together at some secret and simultaneous direction.

"Thus, gentlemen, it can be perceived that a sense of which we have no knowledge takes the place of speech and hearing in that remote lacertian land from which Saurus has come to us; but, unfortunately, we do not ourselves possess this sense, and while he can read, not only the message of conscious man, but interpret the instinct of any unconscious animal when directed to himself, he cannot share this gift with us and communicate through the lightning-swift channels of thought. For him to know our purpose is an instantaneous business; but in order to respond—to answer questions, or to express opinions—he has to fall back upon the medium of writing, since no other means exist. Thus he has perfected this art, and he can already write in ink or pencil, or upon a typewriter, with a speed infinitely superior to our most practised penman or typist. Time, which passes with him incomparably faster than with us, accelerates his mentality in due proportion, and his development proceeds at such a rate of speed as confounds our human experience and calculations until we grow accustomed to it.

"A side issue occurred to me in this connection and I asked him, since time and space are nothing to thought, whether as yet he had found it possible to communicate with his own species; but he pointed out the impossibility. 'Because I know not their medium of language and they know not mine, that is for ever impossible,' he wrote.

"Physically," proceeded Felix, "I should judge Saurus to be now approaching adult perfection. Already his rate of growth has slowed down and the amount of sustenance he demands diminishes a little. He stands four feet six inches tall, measures his height daily and declares that he has nearly ceased to grow. He is healthy in every respect, not much given to exercise, and at ease in a temperature of seventy degrees. He enjoys even higher, but suffers no inconvenience unless it should fall below sixty. His main nourishment is derived from his own plant, which is now cultivated extensively for him at Kew and despatched regularly. This has grown generation after generation from seed, and the hotter they raise it the swifter it matures and the more succulent is the fruit and foliage. I also grow it, because he likes to pick it with his own hands and watch it growing. For the rest every sort of fruit satisfies him, and he appreciates lettuce and endive and cucumbers. He will partake of nothing that has been cooked and drink nothing but water; but he likes water with the chill off and does not drink very much at a time. With the approach of winter he welcomes the light wraps that my sister makes for him, and, when he sleeps, likes his bedroom to be very warm. He does not wear anything to be called clothes and is more comfortable without them.

"I shall now name a physical peculiarity concerning his eyes and then proceed to give you insight into his mentality, where your principal interest must naturally centre.

"A highly skilled oculist, Professor Bode, of Dresden, has examined his eyes and found them to be unique. They are dual and far superior to any terrestrial eye in our knowledge. He possesses what we call 'long sight' and what we call 'close sight', and he can change his focus from one to the other by an act of will which controls the focus. His long sight is telescopic and he can see with unaided vision much only revealed to us in fairly powerful telescopes. For example, he can see the moons of Jupiter and the ring of Saturn with his naked eyes, and to him the planets all reveal their disks as a matter of course. Aided by glasses he distinguishes far more than we are able to do. Greenwich Observatory has presented him with a pair of light but immensely strong binoculars, which he handles and adjusts easily, and he observes detail on the moon that we as yet only know through luna photography. In a moment he can reverse the process and take note if a speck of foreign matter occurs upon his fruit or other food, or some minute fragment of dust, or germ which may have fallen on his person—objects so exceedingly small that only microscopes would enable us to see them. Many of you who have visited Saurus must have studied the appearance of these extraordinary eyes; but for you, who have not seen them, I can only say that they are huge and placid, never lighted by any apparent emotion of joy or sorrow, hope or fear. They have, in fact, no more translatable expression at any time than a pair of motor-lamps.

"I will next dwell upon his mental predilections, which at present are three only. He appears to be deeply interested in human life and its problems. He reads *The Times* every morning and refers repeatedly to a large terrestrial globe which I have transferred from my study to his apartment. When puzzled he invites me to explain a problem, and as his problems often involve our irrational conduct and haphazard procedure, I am frequently unable to give him any satisfactory answer. I should be disposed to say that the more he learns about mankind, the greater his bewilderment becomes. This is probably inevitable, since he brings a rational brain to problems, the solution of which we attempt without any aid from reason. Such problems may not arise in his own planet. Philosophy will probably become his paramount interest; but for the moment he devotes the larger part of his time to advanced mathematics and astronomy. The latter subject cannot, of course, be studied scientifically without the former, and he concentrates at present on astronomy for a definite purpose. This is his intense desire to learn where he came from. He has corresponded with our foremost astronomers, but as yet declares himself unconvinced by any of them. In their judgment, given such meagre data as we can provide, they imagine the bolt to have fallen from the planet Venus; but his study of this possibility convinces him that they must be wrong. He has visited the bolt, which is still awaiting ultimate transfer to the National History Museum, and he examined it with obvious interest. I have also shown him the boxes it contained and begged that he would regard the box in which he came to earth as his own personal possession for life. The suggestion made no appeal to him for he has no sense of property; but the box still occupies a little bracket in his apartment. He asked me if the bolt was capable of withstanding the necessary initial force to impel it on a journey of two million miles before it should have come within the ambit of earth's gravitation and so complete its destined journey. I could not tell him; but he has learned the composition of the bolt and worked out many pages of figures and calculations; and he is of opinion that such a feat was possible. He expressly mentioned a distance of two million miles, and has also told me that he may be taken without doubt to be a product of the solar system. Satisfied so far, he proceeds with his figures and astronomical studies.

"I may report that our great libraries have provided Saurus with literature in liberal quantities and upon a scale that must have been far beyond my power. His reading is confined to these three subjects, and he can, of course, only read in English. Invited to consider other languages, of which he understands there are many, Saurus declined. He declares that our writings and translations will serve his purpose. He is interested to observe the difference between our progress in time and his own; but gathers from it that his terrestrial years are likely to be limited in comparison with our average. The usual length of lizard life is admittedly somewhat shorter than our own.

"One has to approach him as something outside any human experience in the phenomena of consciousness. His own civilization must be for ever hidden from him, and he can only use his intellect upon the material of another planet; while for us he represents an alien intelligence and habits of mind formulated and handed down to him from his own heredity. These lack nearly every impulse and emotion to which we are accustomed in ourselves and our fellow creatures. I have made a thousand suggestions and pointed out that the resources of earth are at his disposal. I have told Saurus that we regard him as an honoured guest with ample right to declare his pleasure and for whom any course of action in our power will be a privilege. I have suggested foreign travel and experience of our civilization. I have assured him that he is free to indicate his desires, so that we may have the pleasure of gratifying them. But he evinces no interest in any programme that I, or my sister, are able to put before him. He is contented with a life of purely mental activity and appears to be satisfied with things as they are. Our minds interest him, not our physical activities, which for the most part he appears to find distasteful. Courtesy and tact, as we understand these terms, lie outside his mental processes. He shocks by his extraordinary indifference to our cherished opinions and the ordinary reticence which actuates the

relations of cultured people; but he is quite unaware that he shocks and would not tread upon our toes for a moment if he imagined that he was doing so. As yet he finds it difficult to judge our emotions from our faces and is confused in his conclusions unless we direct thought to him at the same time. This we generally do, and so he is learning that our expressions denote varying emotions. Himself he is totally lacking in expression, and his countenance tells you nothing of what may be passing in his mind. He is, in fact, an embodied intellect, and one can form no clearer idea of his personal character than we can of any common iguana separated from us by the gulf of unconsciousness. What are his own attributes and how he agrees with, or differs from, his kindred we cannot tell. He may be exceptional and the product of unusually brilliant parents, or he may (which I think more probable) represent the norm and mental average of his kind. He entertains no opinions on this subject, and when my sister expressed some sympathy concerning the pathos of his own situation—exiled as he must be for life from his home and kindred—he obviously failed to comprehend her."

Felix then made a conclusion.

"So thus the being we have agreed to call 'Saurus' stands, and his amazingly rapid development will soon physically cease; but with a brain of this kind, his mental future must be unpredictable. He is healthy and of regular habits. He loves best to sleep in the sun and feel it upon his limbs. By night he usually studies. Lastly, I would say that his memory is astounding. He never forgets and appears incapable of forgetting. He will read a leader in *The Times* to-day and, when it is brought to his recollection a week later, can sit down and rewrite it word for word. Such a devastating power argues cerebral matter that must be exceedingly different from our own, but is doubtless of practical advantage in the world from which he comes, as, indeed, it would be anywhere else. Finally, I will mention another little personal trait. Saurus very much dislikes to be touched. He has seen me shake hands with visitors and understands the meaning of that salutation; but when I perceived his attitude, I instructed him to acknowledge a stranger by bowing, and this he will do. Pray now ask me any questions that may occur to you at this stage of these strange experiences; but I venture to hope that, in the course of a few months at most, I may be able to throw more light if Saurus finds himself able to impart it. I will now submit to you an example of his minute but very legible caligraphy. He dots down his reflections from time to time and leaves them for me to read when I return to him. You will rarely find him without a pencil in his hands, or a book spread open under his eyes."

Felix handed a specimen of the iguana's writing. It needed magnifying-glasses for most of those who read it; but the matter rather than the manner astonished them.

Thus had written Saurus:

"Astronomy should be a vital part of human education, for it would help you to think cosmically, which, as yet, you seem quite incapable of doing. The meagre and worthless things you teach and cherish handicap the minds of your children and start them upon the road of life under a weight of wrong values and false opinions. These harden, become permanent and ruin the promise of the infected pupil. To look upon the nightly sky should instantly inspire to cosmic thought and set your own significance in its proper place. It should teach you that the solar system is not a unique event in the universe, and that our little sun amid all the myriad mightier suns our eyes can see, is not the only one to embrace a system and bring life to conscious beings within it. More seemly and more sane must it be for us children of Sol to recognize our recent entry into time and our modest status in space, admitting that other and vaster suns have brought life and reason to innumerable conscious beings beyond our conception, either in body or in mind, through countless ages before our own creation."

"That is the way he appears to think," explained Felix. "From the cosmical point of view it can hardly be denied that mentality may exist in the universe which would rob us, perhaps, of a certain complacency were we aware of it."

The company was, however, agreed that reflections of this character demanded neither attention nor respect. Then a distinguished zoologist put a question.

"You told us," he said, "that not only man but animals are able to be understood by this peculiar accomplishment of Saurus. What leads you to suspect that any emotion or inclination felt by another animal and involving himself becomes apparent to his understanding?"

"From a practical experience," replied Felix. "Not long ago my Great Dane—a huge but orderly dog—followed me into the dwelling of my guest, and I was unaware that he had done so until I found him confronting the iguana and uttering his deep-mouthed annoyance. Saurus could not hear him, but perceived that the dog was unfriendly. It bristled and bared its

teeth before a spectacle so unusual. The great lizard is a brilliant object now, with crimson crest and dewlap and a body of dark, rich green, illuminated with sparkling emerald encrustations like gems. Saurus showed no fear, but regarded the Great Dane with interest and fixed his eyes upon him—a process that quelled the hound and relieved me of my terror, for I had been quite powerless to intervene. I ordered the dog out with a word of command, and he crept off so that I was able to shut the door upon him. The lizard then turned to his pen. 'Your dog,' he wrote, 'feels acute distrust, dislike and deep suspicion. He told me that he was much feared for you, and he judges that you are doing a dangerous and foolish thing in trusting yourself alone with me. Had he himself been left alone with me, he would have instantly destroyed me, as a creature better dead and so beyond the power of doing you mischief. His thought was entirely for your welfare and he felt that you were incurring peril from which it was his duty to save you. He is quite certain that you run needless risks from which you would be saved by a single application of his mighty teeth.' Saurus then scribbled down this startling assertion: 'To some extent he understood the mental message that I sent him in return. That is the interesting fact. It may be that, though you do not possess my power, inferior animals to some extent do so. Inferiority is a relative term, and a dog may very possibly regard you as an inferior animal, needing his support and succour, just as I myself am bound to regard you as an inferior animal in various directions.'

"He is, then, human to the extent of being vain," suggested the chairman; but Toddleben assured him to the contrary.

"Saurus is incapable of vanity," he replied. "He only deals in facts, and it cannot be denied that we are inferior to himself in various directions, while obviously superior to him in others. But, as a sequel to the dog story, I may tell you that they are now become fast friends. The iguana, by some effort of will, has convinced the Great Dane that he may be trusted as a worthy addition to my household, and a dog that learns he can inspire neither fear nor anger is half-way to being won."

CHAPTER IX

On returning home Felix acquainted Saurus with particulars of the meeting, but before he did so Norah furnished some interesting information.

"He has been working very hard while you were away," she said, "and he tells me that he is now satisfied that he knows where he came from. Two days ago I went in early, to take him some plums and wish him 'good morning', and I could see that he had been working all night. His table was littered with innumerable sheets all covered with algebra and he seemed somewhat exhausted. You can, of course, never tell how he is feeling and he has never written a word on the subject of his health—doesn't appear conscious of it—but I thought that he looked tired and his eyes were hardly as bright as usual. He rose and bowed as he always does; then he sat down and wrote to me. He said that he would reserve all particulars for you; but was now in a position to determine the planet from which he had started. I congratulated him upon doing something our astronomers had failed to do, and asked him if he had come out of the solar system, or some other. Whereupon he wrote that he belonged to our system and his birthplace was well within it."

"Did this appear to be a source of satisfaction to him?" asked the professor, and his sister replied that the discovery left him indifferent.

"'Nothing can come of it,' he wrote, 'because though my people possess the knowledge of how to communicate with you, Earth is not clever enough to communicate with them. Had you been able to do so, much might have come of it, but as yet you do not know enough.'"

Felix felt slightly nettled.

"I much doubt if he is justified in jumping to any such conclusion," he said, and Norah laughed.

"He never jumps at anything. No doubt he will tell you all about it," she answered.

And presently her brother heard what Saurus was to say. The iguana had prepared a typewritten statement and invited his host to sit down and read it; but first he asked a question.

"Have you any knowledge of the asteroids?" he wrote, and Felix shook his head.

"I am no astronomer, my friend," he replied silently.

"So you have given me to understand," replied the other, "but you will find what you need to know about them here."

Then Felix adjusted his glasses and read, while Saurus proceeded with a dish of fruit. He used his silver knife, fork and spoon, and consumed a melon, five peaches, numerous greengages and five-and-twenty mulberries, while the professor, moving away a mass of mathematical calculations, set the typewritten story before him and read it with much care.

Thus wrote Saurus.

"Among the members of our little system are certain bodies known to astronomy as asteroids, or minor planets. They are far smaller than the great planets, and the orbits of most among them lie between Mars and Jupiter. These tiny worlds vary in size, and the greatest of them would represent something near the total bulk of what you call the British Isles. But they are not formless; they are true globes, and your telescopes distinguish their perfect disks when they move sunlit upon the darkness of the nocturnal sky. Astronomers have given them names culled from ancient mythology, and the greatest of them are called Ceres, Pallas, Eros and Hermes. The period of their axial revolution is unknown, but their distance from the sun has been measured and they may be said to lie somewhat more than double as far from him as from earth.

"Concerning their constitution they are believed to be rough rock masses of irregular shape and wholly denuded of atmosphere. That may or may not be the truth about them. From the first I was concerned to learn their nearest approach to earth—a matter of long calculation. It coincides with occasions when they are at their minimum distance from the sun, and these minima bring Ceres and Pallas to within rather more than two million miles of your measurement; but Eros and Hermes approach considerably nearer to earth than this, and Hermes recently passed us within half a million miles.

"Armed with these facts I have made elaborate calculations and arrived at the conclusion that I came from Hermes, and

that I was probably despatched on the recent occasion when the planet passed within some five hundred thousand miles of earth."

"A brilliant achievement," signalled Felix. "Without doubt you have solved the problem. And what do we know of Hermes?"

"Nothing," wrote Saurus; "but the assumption appears to be that it lacks atmosphere and is of a mountainous and arid nature, incapable of supporting any life within human knowledge. I, on the contrary, suspect that within its fastnesses both air and water exist combined with vegetation capable of supporting lizard life. And a point of interest for you and myself is this. A year on the planet Pallas is represented by four and a half years on earth, and though I have yet to work out the exact extent of a year upon Hermes, I expect to find it of somewhat similar duration there."

"One would have expected to hear that the year was infinitely shorter there," said Felix; but the iguana's mathematical mind saw no reason for any such expectation.

"Why?" he asked; and of course the professor couldn't tell him.

"And what do you glean of personal value from this discovery?" he inquired.

"Nothing of value," admitted Saurus. "A problem solved will often lead to valuable deductions and support or confound our opinions; but the fact that I now know where I came from, though interesting to me, leads nowhere. You cannot return what was doubtless intended for a compliment. In the first place you lack the knowledge to despatch a bolt to Hermes, and if you could, no mammal would be able to travel in it."

"And no lizard," ventured Felix.

"It might be possible to suspend my animation and get me back," wrote Saurus, "and I should have no objection to the experiment, if you were able to make it; but you cannot, so we need not waste time on the idea. In any case you would be faced with a far more difficult problem than my compatriots, seeing that they had a much greater target to hit than would you. Earth, seen at a distance of half a million miles, would be a mighty object and, with their vision and the telescopes they doubtless possess, must represent a stupendous sight no doubt; but it probably needs a much more accurate aim to strike Hermes and calculations demanding profounder knowledge than you are likely to possess."

"Most things can be done by us, given money enough to do them," declared Felix. "I should not be prepared to say the deed was beyond human power; but I should certainly not be prepared to say where the money was likely to come from to do it. I can conceive of none prepared to furnish a penny."

"The experiment would not cost as much as one of your battleships," replied Saurus, "and might, if successful, result in an interchange of culture that would show you a way to discard battleships and much else that cumber earth. But it is ruled out. I have now done with astronomy and mathematics, and for such time as I may still live and interest myself in this terrestrial home, I shall devote myself to mankind and endeavour to learn all about him that I am capable of comprehending. I appear to have a better brain than the average man and, had it been possible for me to come to you enriched with what my brain could hold from my own land, it might have been my privilege to serve you; but that was impossible, so I must concentrate upon the best wisdom that you have gathered, digest it, bring my own intellect to bear upon it and find what it amounts to. To this end I must look to your literature and learn all that your wisest ones can teach me."

From that time forward, as autumn waned and another winter descended upon Applewood, Saurus devoted himself to study, slept by day and read interminably through the watches of the night.

"The poor fellow crams himself with knowledge," said Norah to her brother. "Nothing seems to come amiss to him, but nothing annoys him and nothing excites him. 'The more I read concerning his ways, his contradictions and manner of employing his reason, the more I am puzzled to detect the meaning of Man when contrasted with the harmony of purpose to be observed in every other branch of the natural order'—so he wrote for me. Saurus now regards us much as I regard a cross-word puzzle, and he is apparently wasting his intelligence upon the hopeless task of reconciling opposites. I told him so; but he explained that it might yet be done. 'The explanation lies within yourselves,' he wrote. 'Only there can we seek with any hope of finding it. But many of your wise men have looked for it elsewhere and so failed of their quest.'

"And then," added Norah, "he said a strange thing. 'Among your sacred writings,' he told me, 'I find the statement that you

are "born in sin", and if that were indeed so, then many mysteries are explained and your extraordinary wickedness accounted for in some measure; but why should you assume any such radical defect? As yet I cannot deny its apparent truth; but I hope to be able to find that a great error lies here. I do not discover that your young are born sinners. They are born babies; and I suspect that if it were possible to despatch them to Hermes, or elsewhere, immediately upon their arrival, it might be found there was no radical taint of sin about them."

"We have got to deal with the facts of human nature," declared Felix.

"He knows that. But he has a synthetic brain," replied Mrs. Hapgood. "He's preparing some notes for you. He begins to understand our disabilities; but he says there is something he calls a 'time-lag' in man. He feels that we ought to be forwarder, my dear, and the thing that puzzles the poor fellow so utterly is that, despite all the blessings of evolution and relativity and such-like, we don't get a move on. Of course he didn't put it like that, because he doesn't understand slang; but that's what I think he meant. I've ordered two cases of Jaffa oranges for him and I hope they won't be dreadfully sour. He likes the Cape plums pretty well; but he still prefers the tomatoes from Hermes to everything else."

"They are growing them on a huge scale at Kew," said the professor. "We must watch the temperature very carefully for him through the winter."

"Go on getting the muscat grapes as long as they last," begged Norah. "He loves them."

"He doesn't love anything—he couldn't," declared Felix, "but he finds them very sustaining. He only thinks of food in terms of nourishment and seems to know exactly what everything does to him inside."

"He told me that the tomatoes ought to be made a national industry," said Norah, "like corn and potatoes, because they feed the brain; which is where we want all the support we can possibly get. He never has the slightest idea that he is saying anything cynical or impolite. He will 'drop a brick', as we say, without the least idea it is a brick."

"That is bound to happen," answered Felix. "When any member of what is probably an absolutely truthful community finds himself thrust into our society then it must happen."

And not long afterwards Mildred Hapgood experienced a still more potent example of the saurian's method of looking at life. She informed her mother that she had decided to marry the Russian, and presently brought Serge Boluski for a week-end, that he might be introduced to her relations. They found him handsome, flamboyant and on the best terms both with Milly and himself. Of his own affairs he never tired and assured them, in confidence, that, at the psychological moment, he proposed to desert the Soviets, become naturalized in England and seek for diplomatic work in the country of his adoption. "When your Secret Service learns all that I can tell it," he said, "it will swiftly recognize my value, for I come of a high family, famed in Tsarist days; I have diplomacy in my blood and my ancient traditions and natural flair for delicate world problems will take me high."

The professor was rather dazzled by Serge, but Norah felt not so convinced.

"He courts danger," she declared, "and that is not a bad thing in the young; but he is a sly piece of goods. You can see that in his almond eyes. And he is so fearfully pleased with himself."

"They love one another without a doubt," answered Felix; but his sister was not sure even of that.

"Milly loves him with devotion," she answered. "I never thought that she had it in her to love anybody so well; but I am not so certain about Boluski. He tells you frankly that he is deep and subtle, and it may be true. However, her head is screwed on the right way and neither of them seems in a hurry to be married. It may come to nothing. He may be talking nonsense about leaving his own party. If he did, probably somebody would assassinate him at once. And another thing: I doubt if he is so tremendously brave really. It is easy to talk bravely when you are out of danger and he is obviously very fond of his own skin, so I dare say he is only trying to be picturesque."

The Russian visited Saurus and, guided by Mildred, took him seriously. He discoursed at great length on the theme of Russia and his sweetheart conveyed his information through the channels of thought to the iguana, who listened, asked a few questions on paper and eyed Serge in his usual glittering but impassive fashion. Boluski talked grandly concerning himself and was patronizing and pitying to Saurus.

"To find yourself plunged into the society of a superior civilization and to meet Homo Sapiens, while yourself an iguana,

or great tree lizard, must have been a bewildering experience and put no slight strain upon your remarkable intelligence," he signalled. "But I hear you have come out of the test wonderfully well so far and hold your own with our intellectuals in a surprising manner. As a member of the intelligentsia myself, I shall always be at your service, and if you need light on abstruse political questions, write to me and I will throw it willingly."

Saurus bowed, but made no reply, and Milly told him how her betrothed would presently become a citizen of her own country and apply his genius to British problems. It was not until the young man had returned to London that his sweetheart suffered her shock. Then, anxious to learn the visitor's opinion of him, she asked for it and Saurus responded readily. He put a piece of paper into his little typewriter, reflected for a moment and then tapped a swift reply.

Milly read as follows:

"Among the later books that I have read is Cicero—his *Essay on Friendship*. It is full of man's wisdom and, among other excellent things, he says 'that in the whole compass of Nature there is not a more insufferable creature than a prosperous fool'. The sage is right, because a prosperous fool outrages the human idea of justice, and nothing is harder to bear than that, so your mother tells me. Being, however, a fool, the man named Serge Boluski may yet attain to the usual reward of folly, so it will doubtless be better for your own future comfort if you enter into no intimate relations with him."

Mildred grew red.

"You're a hateful little narrow-minded beast!" she cried, "and I never want to see you again."

Then she tore up her communication and left him. Saurus had never seen anger save once, and Milly's temper reminded him of the former occasion.

"The Great Dane looked and felt like that," he reflected. "The emotion of anger is indicated in this way. The human sufferer finds blood rushing to the countenance and fire to the eye. There is an impulse to open the mouth too wide and show the teeth, as the dog did. She clenched her hands as the preliminary to striking me with them, and I think she must have been liberating a considerable volume of sound."

He puzzled to know the reason for such a display, but could not hit upon it; while the girl related her painful experience to her mother and uncle when they met at luncheon.

"Cold-blooded little wretch!" she said. "I never want to see him again. He squats here—feeding on the fat of the land and with comforts that no other lizard ever enjoyed in its life—and then, when a chance comes to say something decent and sporting and tactful and obvious, he goes out of his way to tell an insulting lie—a wretched little brute not worthy to black Serge's boots!"

"Be calm," urged Felix. "You always claim the right to your own opinions, Milly, and must not deny the same privilege to other people. Saurus cannot, of course, pretend to our knowledge of humanity. He has only his own inherited instincts to go upon, and they are often likely to err when he contemplates the complex composition of human character. But, when you speak of being 'sporting and decent and tactful', you name three of our own approved qualities. Of those virtues we most value and find desirable he knows nothing. He comes to us——"

"As a hopeless outsider," declared Milly.

"And we ought to be sorry for outsiders, not angry with them," concluded Norah.

"The consciousness of being an 'outsider', as you term it, is seldom felt by those whom we agree to put under that stern ban," explained Felix. "Saurus would not comprehend the accusation and, in honesty, it cannot be applied to him. As a descendant of parents in the planet Hermes, he is indubitably very much an outsider, but he must not be accused of any human dereliction from what we are apt to regard as 'good form'. Judged by his family standards, if we knew them, we should probably find his manners perfect and his natural inclinations seemly; but when we come to morals, he moves on another plane, and the occasional inclination that we have to speak the truth may be and probably is in him a native impulse, which would occasion no comment among his own people. Such a practice, if pursued by everybody, of course, argues a sort of civilization beyond our power to conceive."

Mildred was intelligent and reasonable when not driven by circumstances to be neither.

"I see the point," she said. "We can only hope that Saurus will live long enough to find how hideously mistaken he was. No doubt he won't apologize even when he does."

"But you can," urged her mother. "Don't go away without saying you're sorry. You must have shown him that he had said something to vex you. He has mastered English perfectly, and if you told him that he was a hateful little narrow-minded beast, as you say you did, then no doubt he wondered in his queer mind what had led you to that conclusion."

"I'll tell him I'm sorry for losing my temper and being rude," promised the girl. "He won't understand it, but still, I'll tell him. If I told him that I was sorry for him, too, and felt very much for him being cut off from his fellow lizards and having to live with a lot of human beings, he wouldn't understand that either."

'The dilemma must ever be insoluble,' thought Felix. 'Born and bred under terrestrial conditions, he brings to them an inheritance of others which apparently combat our own in vital particulars. Whether he will live long enough to accept our culture remains to be seen; but it is certain that he can never develop his own, for the reason that he can never acquire it himself.'

"A jolly good thing, too," answered Milly, who was still a little sore. "If his dreadful people always say what they think, without stopping to consider other people, then the wonder to me is that there's a lizard left alive in Hermes."

Later in the day she apologized to Saurus.

"I'm very sorry I was angry," she said.

"I thought you must be," he replied. "I hope you are quite well again now. Perhaps you ought to take something for it. Have you ever considered a fruit diet?"



CHAPTER X

There came a time when Saurus, having read a library of books despatched to him by various learned societies, began to comment upon all that he had gleaned and attempt a theory of Man. It was a difficult thing to do, because, possessing no sense of good or evil, it took him much anxious thought to realize their significance. Granted one, the opposite became inevitable, and his supreme complication centred in the fact that men themselves differed so radically as to which was which. 'If they cannot agree on this vital question,' thought the iguana, 'how shall a creature like myself, ignorant of both, arrive at any conclusion?'

He could, however, only approach the subject from a standpoint of human knowledge, having no other, and presently he presented Felix with some modest considerations on the subject.

"Assuming that goodness is more desirable than evil," he explained, "then my first problem is to understand why you continue to choose the latter and conduct yourselves as though you preferred it. What must naturally impress an impartial observer is how amazingly wicked, unreasonable and intolerant you all are. And this in spite of so much wonderful counsel to the contrary. Virtue has evidently been preached to you for many centuries, and there are a thousand volumes written by your wise ones to support it, as against the few who advocate vice. Your philosophy is dazzling and fills me with awe. My modest reading but touches the huge wealth of wisdom you permit to moulder upon your bookshelves, for most of these are no more than tombs awaiting some future generation to revive the rare spirits slumbering within them. Sage after sage has indicated the advantages of goodness, and while their roads are many, their goal is always the same. But you do not apparently know a really wise man when you see him, because your standards of wisdom appear to be non-existent. You kneel to those who alter the map, yet ignore others who would better the mind if permitted to do so; your philosophy and art produce such greatness as you possess, because these are abstract things unstained by the ingredients of your selfishness and lust for temporal power.

"Consider a Newton, a Darwin, an Einstein—three masters of wondrous knowledge, all laden with new wealth and new treasures for mankind. Gravitation, Evolution, Relativity: what immense advances upon the road to wisdom! Wide avenues of progress only waiting your advance. But Darwin has only taught you as yet how to improve the animals you use for food. You laugh at eugenics, while the relativity of mankind you have not considered at all. Universal synthesis has been proved to exist; law and order reign in the galaxy and in the atom; then surely the relativity of man should be blazed abroad and raised from theory to practice, that it may awaken good willing, create new obligations and confound your worthless values.

"But you dawdle and dally and yield to all manner of wicked temptations. Science tells me that Homo Sapiens ceased to walk on all fours during the middle Pleistocene Age, half a million years ago. Yet here you are still doing all manner of things that the animals from which you sprang would blush to do. Reason is allowed no place in the sun of your favours and I read of certain seers who actually decry it. Perhaps, seeing where it appears to have led you, they may be right. It is almost possible that your breed will never become amenable to reason.

"Consider the appalling vision displayed by two of your mightiest agonists to-day. One has said that 'though words are very beautiful things, rifles, machine-guns, ships, aeroplanes and cannon are more beautiful things'. And another has directed his people 'not to seek out objective truth in so far as it may be favourable to others, but uninterruptedly to serve one's own truth'. These men would dominate Europe and drive Liberty into eternal night.

"Yet all you need, you have. The achievements of science are confounded by later achievements; the conquests and empires of mankind are swept away into the dustbin of Time; but human wisdom remains static. I find that your magnificent discovery of the Golden Rule has never as yet been matched by any other theory of human conduct. From the Far East it came, when the West was still in the cradle; and a very frosty welcome it has received, yet nothing can ever destroy a principle so potent.

"Your follies and villainies, then, are not less than astounding when one considers the harvests of wisdom that enriched earth in her earlier days, and the appalling disparity between your performance and your possibilities must fill every thinking man and woman among you with bewilderment. Certain dynamic qualities proper to your race have confounded reason throughout historical time and turned your footsteps away from any goal of goodness; but consciousness should long ago have made you mentally cleaner, for evolution was always ready and willing to help. But you scorned her aid. Instead you preserved the primitive, old impulses, nursed them, fostered them and carried the worst of your endowment

forward, starving and neglecting all that was best of it.

"Philosophy's patient rays shine through the murk; goodwill to man is still a notable ideal; but only intermittent gleams light the welter of eternal evil that you will to create. So goodness is called to stand aloof until you are ready for it, or lost beyond the power to recognize virtue and justice any more.

"In which case the Golden Rule must go down into darkness, along with all the rest of your hoarded wisdom, and seek for a better reception in a more reasonable world than yours, where possibly the mammal is not king.

"You are still at the parting of the ways and may find again the road that was marked out in the Golden Age of Greece, before the risen sun of philosophy vanished in the Dark Ages. Your own Golden Rule awoke vast hope in the heart of goodwill; but to-day all is changed and panic fear tortures your heartstrings, to see death stalk abroad like the man-eating tiger and another Dark Age at hand.

"I have been trying in my small fashion to read this riddle of why a conscious being, potentially good, is contented to grovel in such a mire of evil as you have made of your excellent world. I have examined the relative claims of good and evil as best I might on this limited acquaintance, and I have convinced myself that goodness is better for man than evil can be. But if that be so, then his first step must be to learn wherein goodness abides, and distinguish it by many signs of difference from its opposite. The lust for power has ever been your bane and you have set about the eternal task to win it without a thought as to its significance, or any idea of what true power must mean. To conquer others is your ambition, never to conquer yourselves: the vital victory before any real goodness can be attained. You start your children upon this faulty quest from their cradles and only the rare and exceptional child ever lives long enough to see wherein right power exists, or perceive that his life has been wasted in the adventure. Your ideal is happiness, because you are built so; but your dream of happiness is a nightmare, since you cannot realize the negation of self that alone brings any man in sight of such a condition.

"I study wisdom that can have no meaning for me; but I see the lesson for you on a thousand pages which I daily read, and I mark how human philosophy has revalued your values again and again, welcoming evolution and proceeding from strength to strength, while purifying her own goodness as she goes. Great rules of conduct await mankind devised and created by his fellow beings, and not the least of them but transcends in every particular his own practice. Some may, indeed, lie beyond his power of attainment since he declines the steep and stern journey that ascends to them; but devoted spirits are always to be found upon these icy paths, and your history is rich in lonely, fearless men who have laboured upon the heights and won to happiness and peace by casting away the shadows that stand for these things with most of you. Your pioneers have stored what none could steal from them and in their nakedness been richly clothed, in their hunger supported by better bread than is made from wheat, in their weakness been fortified, in their poverty found great measure of wealth. The things that can be taken from such men by their fellows matter not. Their imperishable possessions are beyond theft and roguery and any disaster—for ever safe while they live to enjoy them, and death itself may well be welcome to those who know their duty done."

Felix took a banana from the great fruit-dish, peeled it, ate it and regarded Saurus with melancholy eyes.

"It is possible—nay probable—that you are not qualified to reach a just estimate of us," he signalled.

"It is certain that I am not," wrote the lizard, "and what the opinion of my kind, supported by their own wisdom, might be I cannot know. My task is only to assess you through your own knowledge and in the light of what the most competent among you have agreed to call good and bad. My limitations are obvious and my opinions valueless; but there remain the sources of my human knowledge, and though they have no influence upon me, since I stand outside them as a spectator, any reasoning creature must admit that they should have some influence on you. Take an example and ask yourself if it were submitted to your impartial judgment how you would argue from it as to the reasoning power of man. Ignorant though I am, it is impossible not to realize your contemptible enormities before such defiance of all that you might win from your theory of righteousness. Not long since I read how at Geneva your nations, meeting in the interest of peace, debated without a blush the shameful problem of whether they should bomb or not bomb one another from the air! An awful war still reverberated its thunder in their ears; the massacre of their young men was still in the memory of these old men, yet they solemnly conceded the right to destroy civilization thus. You are a cruel and lying species. You have not kept faith with evolution; you have not kept faith with yourselves; you have not kept faith with your own prophets and seers."

"Be fair," begged the professor. "The bomb in our lamentable warfare is no novelty: only the latest method of its application. The new is no worse than the old."

"I am neither fair nor unfair," wrote Saurus. "I can only put facts under your observation. It is true, no doubt, that those who have the wit to make bombs and the infamy to employ them find their results more efficacious applied in this manner. Where machinery is concerned you are both idiotic and wicked in your use of it. But how shall you condone a new wickedness by saying that it is no worse than the old? How shall you prostitute evolution to the uses of villainy? How shall you excuse your negative attitude when a possibility occurred of drawing up some universal code of elementary decency—the element being the sweet air you breathe? Could your common sanity not agree that the suffocation and slaughter of mothers and new-born babies and the destruction of noble architecture and humble homes is damnable under any pretext whatsoever?"

Felix perused the indictment and then prepared to depart.

"In truth I know little of international politics," he confessed.

"A repellent subject and doubtless you are better employed," replied Saurus. "I am only concerned to point out how far your knowledge lags behind your wisdom and how you invent and discover, while utterly unable to apply with self-control or self-respect. You are such a singular admixture of sagacity and folly, so under the dominion of unfruitful impulse, still clinging to pitiful ideals, which even your scanty wits have long since condemned, still concerned with interests that only confound good conduct and block every sort of rational progress.

"The irony of the situation," he concluded, "almost gives me an insight into what you call 'comedy' and 'tragedy'. The good and precious things are awaiting you all, and every nation at heart desires peace and security—those age-long, fundamental demands of happiness. It is the things that do not matter, the challenges that do not bear upon happiness but make for universal misery that separate you and arouse your passionate hostility. The feud is handed down from generation to generation. One kingdom speaks and thinks of another as its natural enemy, whereas Nature knows of no such habitude. Your children are as a harp upon which false harpers strum their tunes. They know well their poverty, yet play them in the ears of youth, to dazzle inexperience with the glories of dominion and the sweets of power. They sing that peace and contentment and goodwill are mean ideals for the young; they preach conquest, victory, heroism, point the old blood-stained road to their children and teach the mothers to be proud to bear them for it."

The professor rose, bowed and prepared to leave the dwelling of Saurus and return to his own. He was weary and had already determined not to see his guest again that day.

"Good morning," he signalled. "I am about to take my luncheon."

During the course of the meal, Norah observed that her brother appeared to be in low spirits and trusted that all was well with him.

"One finds oneself a little impatient sometimes with the iguana," he confessed; and when Felix called Saurus 'the iguana', it always meant that they had differed.

"Though made of a sort of bleak reason," he continued, "being, as it were, a thinking-machine and nothing else, yet he can be as unreasonable and intolerant as anybody at times. He generalizes in a very unscientific fashion and comes to faulty conclusions as a result. It would not altogether surprise me if he overdid all this intensive study and ended by going out of his mind. One thing becomes exceedingly apparent: the more he learns about us, the less he likes us."

"He cannot like or dislike," answered Mrs. Hapgood. "He shares none of our emotions. He has mastered the meaning of good and bad, and he realizes that these opposites arise naturally out of the form our evolution has taken. To him it is a vagary of evolution to have done so; but he accepts the fact and regards goodness and badness as a part of our unfortunate heritage. Of course, he cannot fail to see what perfectly horrible forms badness is apt to take and how prone we are to it, but he doesn't dislike us; he only wonders why we make ourselves so unhappy, seeing that happiness appears to be our ruling passion."

"Be that as it may, he allows himself great latitude of language and can be exceedingly annoying at times," declared the professor. "We are now used to the absolute absence of those qualities of gratitude, tact and good taste to which our species pay tribute on our own plane of society; but one would argue that, with his intelligence, he might have perceived

their value as an emollient and solvent to life. To eat your bread, accept your hospitality and tell you to your face that most human beings are benighted scoundrels is bad manners and much to be deplored."

"He belongs to the 'intelligentzia'," explained Norah. "The intelligentzia regard manners as we regard the old Victorian draperies—a stuffy and worthless addition to life. The intelligentzia sit on the fence, quite safe and out of harm's way. They criticize everybody and everything and find all is wrong. But they never make any sort of effort to put it right: they only sneer at those who are toiling to put it right and bearing the heat and burden of the day. They pretend to be chin-deep in the waters of reality and are merely cutting silly antics on the bank. I believe that Saurus would try to be useful if he could, and I'm sure he doesn't mean to be rude to anybody. He's only puzzled, poor fellow; and you can't blame him for that. War-mongers and rulers and slaves, and the fighting services and parliamentary procedure, and state-craft and religion, and foreign languages and economic security and trade, and the rate of exchange, and teaching babies to wear gas masks, and all the rest of it must be very difficult for him. You should remember his ridiculous age, too."

"You may be right," admitted Felix. "One has to try and see from his untutored standpoint. He certainly wrote quite an intelligent remark about foreign languages. He holds that one of our gravest disabilities is the scourge of so many tongues. They render precision and exactness impossible. 'Issues of immense significance to you,' he declared, 'may be at the mercy of an interpreter and the welfare of a nation turn on misunderstanding of a word.' He had discovered that our most sacred writings lie under a cloud of wrong translation—another of the things that mystifies him."

"To be capable of mystification is quite a human trait," said Norah. "He may live to develop others. We have plenty of quite nice qualities for him to copy."

"He did mention economic security," remembered the professor. "He quite grasps the meaning of that. He pointed out that while the democracies struggle to secure it as the vital thing and admit that, so far, they have failed to do so, the dictators, who have also failed, conceal the fact and hide it from their nations by muzzling the Press and enflaming the people's minds with lust for conquest and the picturesque lie that guns are better than butter."

CHAPTER XI

Saurus pursued his studies and denied himself to none meanwhile. It was understood that all manner of intelligent human beings who desired to do so should see him, and hours were fixed for their visits. He accepted this arrangement as reasonable, learned much from his communion with learned men and perceived the variety and immensity of human interests, noting how theories of conduct differed and with what intense zeal and ardour serious people supported their own convictions. The fanatical spirit that not a few revealed threw light for him upon past history and explained certain stages of philosophic thought. He observed that the mob of men was still highly inflammable material and always quick to catch fire, as of old, from those with the wit to command and impose their will. In certain conditions even the eternal human selfishness withers beneath this pressure: a phenomenon that interested Saurus much.

"Under the impulse and magic of a great man," he wrote for Felix, "it appears that your kind can renounce their besetting sin for a season, cast it off like a garment and stand committed to conduct inspired by the genius of some individual they may never see and will certainly never know. No matter how spurious the hero may himself be, he provides a cause that wins the multitude to fight under his banners with a devotion and adoration that stops not at self-sacrifice and death. Your religions and your conquests were doubtless rendered possible by this love of leadership and willingness to accept the inspiration of seer, sovereign, or dictator. But such majestic figures are transitory. They come and go as the comet, whom some welcome for a portent of good and others fear as the harbinger of evil. They write a new pattern on earth, or burn a new purpose into the spirits of men, then pass with the generation that bore them and fade from the memory of the next. Theories of conduct come and go; human interests are shuffled and dealt again like cards, awakening new hopes and possibilities; while change eternal ensures the systole and diastole of life's beating heart."

Felix now found the iguana to be concentrating on a certain problem and, as he approached its solution, he became somewhat less responsive than usual. But he was always well content to see men, women and children, and Mrs. Hapgood, who brought young people into his presence, discovered that he liked to have them about him and read their unspoken thoughts concerning himself. They would approach him without prejudice or preconceived opinions, and Norah was amused to notice that the younger they happened to be, the more easily they took Saurus for granted as a fellow being and not as a freak. A small girl, when taking leave, put her arms round his neck and kissed him, which threw Saurus into deep thought for several hours after the child was gone.

He discussed the experience with Norah at a later time and confessed to a shadowy recognition of a human discovery as yet by him not understood.

"I have long wondered," he wrote, "what may be this thing of which the wise write so much and call 'beauty'. I have tried to envisage it and failed; but a dim apprehension of it appears to lie within the eyes of your little children. In their irradiant depths, as in a glass darkly, I feel that the thing known as 'loveliness' may possibly be found before life's reality ascends, like a cold mist, to cloud it. But knowledge wrinkles young brows and banishes the miracle out of young eyes so quickly."

Two things happened together soon after another year had begun and a mild adventure befell Saurus, while a second of far more startling nature happened to Norah's daughter. The iguana found his interest in the first incident, which belonged to mind; but he became involved also in the second and was able, for the first time, to do a human being considerable service.

An electric bell from the home of the visitor communicated with Felix—a convenience that he had installed in case of any urgent demand. Saurus, however, never used it, because he seldom needed anything and was always prepared to wait patiently for it when he did. But there came a night at last when the bell rang, and the professor, wakened from sleep, learned that he was wanted immediately. In haste he rose, and since a January frost held Applewood in its starry grip, Felix feared that something had happened to the heating apparatus and that Saurus suffered from too low a temperature and might even be seriously ill. The hour was half-past two, and, hastening into warm garments, he proceeded down the passage of communication to find the lights shining brightly and his guest sitting in comfort and warmth with his little table drawn beside an electric stove. Saurus had evidently been writing at some length and a typed epistle awaited the professor. Now the iguana dashed off a few introductory words upon his typewriter and held them out in his little hand.

"Something of apparent importance to you has occurred," he wrote, "and everything is set down here."

"Surely you might have left it until the morning," thought Felix, and Saurus, reading this reflection, made reply.

"An element of great urgency involving human life made it impossible to delay," he answered. "It may be well to read what I have written as quickly as possible and so convince yourself that I was justified in waking you."

So Toddleben took a chair by the stove and read what his guest had to tell him. In his precise and chilly diction wrote Saurus, for he had formed his style upon the professor's own and always strove for clarity.

"While reading your eminent philosopher, Immanuel Kant," he began, "I became suddenly conscious that a human being was addressing me in considerable distress of mind and from a distance. As you are aware, experiments in this method of approach have been made with success, and I can receive messages and information from anywhere on Earth if the appeal is directed immediately to myself. To-night came information concerning Mildred Hapgood, your niece and the daughter of your sister. It was she herself who informed me of her exceedingly unpleasant predicament, and there can be no doubt that she finds herself in a critical and rather terrible position—to some extent, apparently, the result of her own mistaken judgment. The facts you will doubtless ascertain at a later date, but all that matters for the moment would seem to be that she is the prisoner of Serge Boluski and other wicked men, and in great danger of her life.

"She is bound, hand and foot, at the following habitation: No. 14 Carlyle Terrace, Chelsea, London. She has visited the dwelling on former occasions without hurt, but to-day she was detained and faced with various painful facts. The Russian has been using her as a tool and deceiving her concerning his affections. He is now prepared to torture and ultimately destroy her if she will not divulge secret information which he believes that her position at the War Office has enabled her to acquire. I could not follow many details of her narrative; but she makes it clear that time is all important. She is at present alone in captivity, but has been informed that her captors will return ere long and put her to considerable suffering if she continues to resist their demands. Her suggestion, therefore, is that you should endeavour to communicate at once with the London police and direct them to enter No. 14 Carlyle Terrace, secrete themselves and presently secure the gang of evil-doers when they return."

The professor hesitated not a moment. He rushed away, rang up Scotland Yard, explained the nature of the pending tragedy and received comforting information that instant steps would be taken. An hour later he himself was rung up, to learn that sensational and satisfactory events had followed his direction and that certain ugly customers, including Serge Boluski, were in the hands of the police, while Mildred, badly shaken but unharmed, had been conveyed to her flat. An hour later Milly herself rang up to tell her mother that all was well, "thanks to the iguana.

"I just thought of him in time," she said, "but could hardly realize my luck when I found that I had got through. Bless him for me."

She proceeded to give a graphic account of her adventure and revealed much animosity to the Russian responsible for it.

Professor Toddleben went to town on the following morning, feeling it his duty to support his niece under these sorry conditions; and when she had seen him off, Norah spent an hour with Saurus and told him all that she knew. He ate two pine-apples while he listened to her story.

Mrs. Hapgood always spoke aloud in the lizard's company. He understood what she was saying, and she found it much easier to utter her thoughts than merely think them.

"You have saved Milly's life, dear Saurus," she began, "and though you don't understand about gratitude and so on, I do beg you will feel how deeply grateful we all are and how much we shall be in your debt as long as we live. But you have done much more than this. Thanks to your wonderful gifts, you were able to set our police at work and afford them a clue that they have long been seeking. I don't understand the details, and they wouldn't interest you if I did; but there has been a cunning system of espionage operating here for a long time, and national information slipping out to other powers about our armies and navies and air force and so on. Spies have long been at work, and the difficulty was first to find them, and to learn what government they were spying for afterwards. Nationality is no criterion. A Russian may be in the secret service of Germany, or a Frenchman gleaning information for Italy. Brilliant scoundrels of this kind doubtless sell their services to the highest bidder. One hopes, of course, that no Englishman would betray his country for cash; but you never know.

"At any rate," continued Norah, "this unspeakable person, Boluski, does not appear to have been working for Russia. His Embassy denies any suggestion that his secret activities were actuated by any desire to serve them, though I dare say he

was all the time. It will all be gone into, no doubt; but what interests me is how he deceived Mildred, made love to her and won her absolute trust and affection. As their friendship advanced and they became betrothed, the wily wretch pretended to confide in her and explain that the whole Russian scheme of leading our Labour Party into Communism was in his hands and that he only waited the psychological moment to expose it and reveal his compatriots in their true colours. There was nothing very wonderful about that, because everybody knew it already. The battle is ceaseless, the money forthcoming, and no doubt Communism is going ahead behind the scenes and only waiting to surprise our rulers when the proletariat rises in its might against them; but this is where Milly admits that she was a sad fool and simply played into Boluski's hands. In exchange for his confidence she talked a lot of nonsense and gave him to understand that she, too, enjoyed great privileges and was much deeper in the trust and confidence of the War Office than any young female clerk was at all likely to be. But this was what he hoped and what had inspired his pretended affection. Milly can brag in a very convincing fashion, like any educated modern girl, and undoubtedly led the man to believe she possessed valuable information. You are always ready to credit what you wish may happen, and there is no doubt that Boluski imagined she did know War Office secrets of great value for him and his horrid friends. Again and again he endeavoured to get information out of her—attempts that naturally tickled her vanity and possibly her sense of humour also, since she knew that she had nothing whatever to tell him except what the army paid for soap and button-polish and details of that sort. But she was playing with fire, and finding his perfidy would not win her secrets, he trapped her when she visited his private residence, as she was in the habit of doing, threw off the mask and demanded to know certain vitally important facts, which the little idiot had led him to believe were in her possession as a confidential clerk!

"Of course, you can see where she had landed herself. She kept her nerve and owned up, with laughter, that it was all swank and she knew nothing of the slightest use to a foreign power; but neither he nor four of his companions, who suddenly appeared, would believe her. She had deceived her lover completely and soon found it impossible to undeceive him. She said that a new and strange Boluski suddenly appeared—like something out of the *Strand Magazine*. He was icy and devilish, and apparently in the very best 'shocker' tradition. His companions all behaved in the same theatrical manner, and she was informed that if she did not divulge the information in her knowledge they would torture her to death. They left no doubt of their determination, and Milly perceived that it would be quite easy for them to give her a dreadful time, then murder her and throw her into the adjacent river without much difficulty or danger to themselves."

Saurus interrupted, held up his hand for silence and typed a suggestion.

"One would have thought that, being human, she might have lied, since you attach so much importance to your lives," he said.

"She did," replied Norah, "but, being human also, Boluski did not believe her. All the villains knew that she was lying because, under the agony of the moment, she couldn't hit upon anything very bright. She told them that America was making half a million bombing planes for England; but they knew that was nonsense, and one scoundrel slapped her face and said that another falsehood would mean torture and death. They gagged her and bound her and left her, saying that they would return in three hours. She heard them leave the house, and then came her great inspiration to try and tell you about it."

"You doubtless feel the human emotion of love for your offspring," wrote Saurus, "and will be gratified to hear that she was not tortured and slain. And the scoundrels will feel much cast down to find their hopes shattered and their patient plots revealed. The incident throws light on a discovery which I myself have made on the subject of mankind. Trying, as I daily and nightly do, to arrive at some explanation of his dilemma and learn whether he will find the road by which he may escape from it, I am now convinced by the nature of things that the chances are remote. You will be sorry to learn this, and Professor Toddleben, with his enthusiasm for humanity, will also regret it."

"Tell me what the dreadful snag is," begged Norah; "but I trust you're wrong. You must always allow for the hopeful spirit that has carried us through so many dreadful messes in the past. Man has bobbed up serenely again and again, when no doubt superior creatures like yourself would have felt pretty sure that he was down and out."

The iguana pushed a page of his tiny writing towards her.

"Cast your eye over the situation as I now see it," he directed, and Mrs. Hapgood, picking up a large magnifying-glass, obeyed.

"What were Darwin's last sanguine aspirations?" began Saurus. "He expressed a hope that man would tend steadily towards perfection, both in body and in mind. Perfection, of course, is out of the question for any created thing, be it mouse or mountain, man or star. Perfection is a static condition and therefore impossible in a dynamic universe, and many of your wise men doubt whether you are even making a faint advance towards it. They deny improvement of morals and suspect the present ebb tide will have no future flow. The reason for their pessimism is what I sought and have found."

Norah stopped and sighed.

"I'm sorry you've found any such thing," she said, "but they may be wrong, after all."

Then she went on reading.

"Change is the law of life and, when rational and constructive, produces evolution; when disorderly and destructive, tends to devolution and extinction. Then what is the huge opposition to orderly progress peculiar to mankind and now threatening his fragile civilization? The evolution of his wits cannot be denied, but why should it coincide with devolution of his morals? Science recognizes the existence of law in human affairs, and philosophy indicates the factor of love as an omnipotent ingredient in them; but neither law nor love means anything to man when weighed against power. On the one side is to be noted a universal lack of security in your politics, statesmanship, industry and commerce—a shattering situation where none can look forward with any confidence to what your warring regimes are breeding; and on the other an ideal of unselfishness, goodwill, mercy and charity, to compose every problem brought within its ambit and bring you, by the road of self-denial and generosity and good faith, a long stride nearer the happiness and contentment you desire. Why, then, are law and love alike powerless and their cry hushed before the eternal thirst for conquest and the victory of temporal might?

"The answer appears to lie in a fundamental error that has grown upon you and from which escape would mean an upheaval beyond your power to create. You are a gregarious species and have discovered certain ways to gregarious living; but, hidden behind them, lurks that all-powerful separatist instinct of selfishness which makes of your gregarious life a fraud and falsehood. The unconscious herds of grass-eating creatures live in peace, because they know not to be selfish; but since, on this planet, selfishness continues to be the first law of life, you cannot herd save under a garment of eternal lying and evasion. The truth would disrupt your system and prove that it is built upon sand. In other worlds—my own probably included—truth, no doubt, was accepted by consciousness and does not present the same stumbling-block and difficulty. Your diplomacy, state-craft, daily interchanges between man and man are all built on one vast pretence. Your infants are taught to lie from the cradle in the name of good manners. Unadorned truth would banish all that you hold seemly and discreet. You shiver at the thought of naked truth. But though a civilization arising upon pretence is obviously elementary, to change it would demand a revolution in behaviour of which you are now incapable."

"So you'd be afraid we are stogged in the mires of selfishness for ever more?" asked Norah.

"I only point out the difficulty of building righteousness on this foundation," wrote Saurus, "and the prodigious problem it presents. Your genius may yet solve it, of course; but only by making radical changes of architecture for a new civilization."

"You paint with too black a brush," she declared. "If tact and courtesy and consideration for other people's feelings make us palter with the truth sometimes, these amenities are not in the least vital. No doubt it seems absurd to you that we teach our children to be civil to strangers to-day and punish them for lying to us to-morrow; but civilization doesn't hinge on little matters of nice behaviour. Nobody is deceived really, and if we like to pay a certain price for being one of a herd, where's the harm? Probably your nation and every other has to do the same; and I cannot see what grounds you have for assuming they are all so fussy about the exact truth in Hermes. In any case, the real truth about anything is beyond us, so why niggle? You may be a most exceptional iguana. You might have found your passion for truth much resented in your own country. You may even be much happier and more comfortable here than you would have been up there."

"It is perfectly possible," agreed Saurus.

"Nobody knows the truth about anything," repeated Norah, "so why make life more difficult than it is already by going out of your way to try and tell it? You are just as likely to have got hold of the wrong end of the stick as anybody else. You know what an exceedingly illusive thing truth is at the best of times—much too illusive to try and build civilization

upon. And if we are ever going to get goodwill and trust and sympathy and love and mercy into the world, it's not the least use trying to begin by telling people what we really think of them. The difference between what we think of our dearest friends, even, and what they think of themselves is so terrific that, far from improving civilization by any gesture of that kind, we should smash it from the top to the bottom."

Saurus nodded in his thoughtful fashion. Then he wrote:

"Which brings us to an amicable agreement: that the thing simply can't be done."

"Not that way," replied the lady; "but there may be another. At present the truth as seen by other people is more often unpleasant than not, and those who delight to tell it, in season and out, are very unpopular."

"I read that many eminent persons have been destroyed for trying to tell it," admitted Saurus, "but I still believe that without veracity and the security arising from it your search for happiness is a matter of much disappointment, because the tonic and stimulating thing lies in the search. Happiness may be for ever out of reach, but hope of it never deserts you."

"Hope is our big noise," agreed Norah, "and you can't really lose hope for us while we have the pluck to get up every morning hoping for ourselves and opening the newspaper, longing for a bright headline. Even the professor does it, though, of course, he never finds one."

CHAPTER XII

When Milly returned home, to recover after her painful adventure, Saurus was, in some vague fashion, aware that he ought to be sorry for her. Himself, he only experienced surprise at her thanks. All human emotions puzzled him not a little, but had long ceased much to interest him. At the moment, however, he was full of an exciting discovery, for he had detected in himself a sensation entirely foreign to his nature and quite the last to have been anticipated for him. He was full of this experience and desired to invite Mildred's opinion concerning it; but he found her upon her return so preoccupied with her own affairs and so furious to think of her adventure that he made efforts to remember the incident.

"Doubtless a most inconvenient experience," he wrote, after acknowledging her many expressions of gratitude. "It is clear that love may be a disappointment to a young woman, and your tribulation shows that a great many lovable people are by no means trustable."

"You say these trite things because you are an iguana and not a human being," she answered. "One of the first signs of love is an idiotic conviction that the loved object is to be trusted before the whole world. Of course, after you're married, you generally find you were mistaken, and that's where the strain begins and love may crash altogether, or just sink down into the usual humdrum business of being linked to a disappointment. But, in my case, the maddening thing is to think a girl like myself should have been so utterly deceived and never seen through this abomination. It may surprise you to hear it, Saurus, but at present I actually hate myself more than I hate him."

"To hate must be very fatiguing," he replied, "and I should try not to hate anybody any more. Boluski, too, no doubt, is hating you for having deceived him, and hating me also for assisting to save you. Unruly events of this sort show the strange disasters that happen in a world where good and evil are so important. But no doubt some other young male of your species will appear to console you, though you must not give him your love until you feel he is orderly and trustworthy."

Milly laughed and called his attention to the fact that she was laughing.

"That's the first time I have been amused since it all happened," she said, and so gave him opportunity for the matter in his own mind.

"I can always observe by the twinkle of the eyes, the creasing of the skin, the elongation of the lips and opening of the mouth when human beings are laughing," he explained, "and though I am not physically made to laugh, a strange thing has happened to me, and I believe that something I have read begins to awaken in me a shadow of the emotion of amusement which makes you laugh. This must argue what you call 'a sense of humour', and if that be so, then I am unquestionably the only iguana from Hermes that ever felt it. And that fact shows how it is possible for nurture to triumph over nature."

"I can't imagine anything on earth amusing you," said Milly. "In fact it's generally quite the other way. Taking it all round we cast you down and you never see any funny side to us; which, from our point of view, makes you so funny yourself."

"I will tell you of two things that awakened this curious sensation," he replied, "and you shall judge if there was anything to occasion it. I may of course be quite mistaken."

He typed with lightning speed, then handed the sheet to Mildred.

"You may see nothing amusing and, in that case, I am wrong," he wrote, "but keep an open mind. The facts are these. Probably in my own country nothing amusing has ever happened and Iguana Sapiens therefore lacks any such experience; but on earth the confusions, paradoxes and dilemmas arising from good and evil have evidently educated you to laugh and trained your features to do so. Now yesterday I read how the famous Lumbwa tribe of Africa go forth to fight lions armed only with spear and shield, risk their lives in the tremendous encounter and exhibit immense human qualities of courage and heroism while so doing. No doubt they are often worsted and perish; but when they triumph and the lion falls, they save his fat and anoint their children with it, that the infant Lumbwas may inherit the leonine bravery of the dead beast. Then you designate savages; but now consider another spectacle. The British otter-hunter, supported by well-trained dogs, pursues his prey, and having hounded the little creature to death, without any courage or heroism on his own part and probably no worse hurt than getting his boots wet, cuts the slaughtered otter up and dabs its blood upon the faces of his boys and girls. Him you call a sportsman, and in your esteem the term 'sportsman' apparently embraces every desirable virtue. Now be quite frank. Does that strike you as in any sort of way amusing, or am I mistaken in

supposing the emotion it wakened in me was to be described as such?"

"It's quite amusing; though it wouldn't amuse otter-hunters much," answered Milly. "I used to be keen about otter-hunting years ago, but it rather alters your outlook after you've been hunted, caught and nearly killed yourself. You hear plenty of sporting people say that wild creatures enjoy being hunted; but I am now in a position to contradict them."

"Many who eat lobsters would probably declare that they revel in being boiled alive," replied Saurus. "Thus personal appetite condones much else. It appears to be a thorny subject, and you have tortured one another so long and so savagely that cruelty to lesser animals, for your personal pleasure, does not strike you as barbarous. Now for my second instance. In one of your newspapers I recently read that a new gun had been invented to kill people as they have never been killed before, and on the selfsame page—the very same page, mark you—I also read that the diminishing birth-rate is causing your nations much anxiety. Now does that strike you as entertaining?"

"A scream," answered Mildred, and then changed the subject.

"Why?" she asked, "are you so excited to find if you can see a joke?"

"The interest is to know whether one so different from man can acquire his way of looking at things," replied Saurus, "because the gap to be crossed seems almost too profound. I conceive of my species as you are apt to regard the working bee, whose short life is an endless toil, yet that brief existence may not lack such happiness as a bee can experience. She gathers bee-bread and honey—not for herself but the hive—meantime her personal sojourn in sunshine amid the fragrance and rainbow colours of many flowers may reach a contentment and delight that you will never know. Then, in five or six weeks, all is over, the insect worn out, her wings frayed, her flight finished. A day comes when she is too weak to alight on the bee-board any more. She falls beneath it on returning from her final effort and is sped. Thus she has devoted her life to the common weal and proceeded upon the immemorial path of her kind. No selfish act has ever been committed by her, no selfish thought ever entered her tiny brain. And no credit whatsoever attaches to her, for it must not be claimed for the working bee that she operates above good and evil, but merely outside them. If you have never conquered temptation to do ill, then you can have done nothing to be called good. And so I imagine my people to be. In your case consciousness brought good and evil along with it. In ours I judge that consciousness, proceeding upon another road and quickening other faculties than you possess, has not created this confusion."

"Because you are neither good nor bad yourself," suggested Milly.

"Exactly so," he agreed. "I can only judge by myself and I may be wrong. Such a neutral attitude is obviously enormously helpful to progress, because the eternal friction of opposition is not present; but against the amity of a conscious hive, where change proceeds with law and order, you have to remember the astounding things that your endless differences and devilries accomplish."

"We British are individualists and nobody will ever make robots of us. We may be wicked, but we are never dull," declared Milly. "Of course Hermes must be as dull as ditch-water if nobody is ever good or bad. No democracy, no liberty—nothing. You couldn't have any art, for instance, without comedy or tragedy."

Saurus agreed.

"It is but just and fair to balance the gain against the loss," he wrote. "Most men would probably prefer earth, while the greater number of intelligent iguanas vote for Hermes. For you, most of the things that you wish to happen generally fail to do so, because you want them to happen to yourselves. Thus unsatisfied hope breeds misery; and even when things go your way, they usually fail of expectation. With us I suspect that life proceeds differently, because wealth and liberty and power and ambition are unknown, love and hate unfelt, good and evil meaningless. Thus stability and serenity for all exist as in the nature of things, but create no satisfaction. We know not freedom or slavery, laughter or tears, courage or cowardice, riches or poverty."

"It sounds a hell of a world," answered Milly. "I almost wish you could go back and teach them what a blessing a joke is, or even a good row sometimes."

"If that were possible," he replied, "and my kin learned what I was able to tell them concerning the world to which they had sent me, the mind of the iguana might experience a real human emotion at last; but the emotion would be one of bitter disappointment, and before I had finished my story, every lizard on Hermes would be thanking fortune that it had been

created an iguana and not a human being."

"Why should they be disappointed?" she asked, and he explained.

"Viewing earth, my people would perceive a world much mightier than their own, and they have probably leapt to the conclusion that it contains a conscious being far superior to themselves. One perceives their schemes. They despatched a sound egg, the product of sound parents, and judged that it would be nurtured, nourished and instructed in the manners and customs of its hosts. Then they doubtless dreamed that I should return to them enriched with wisdom and understanding, to advance their own inferior civilization; for they nothing doubted that if they could send me to you, you would possess means to return me to them.

"It is as well that you lack the power to do so, however, because my story of life upon earth could only appal them. I should return an adult iguana, utterly uneducated—a savage possessed of knowledge mostly evil. Henceforth, when they lifted their lizard eyes to earth, they would shudder to think what goes on up here. They would find that my horrid narrative had actually awakened within their hearts and heads disturbing instincts, new and strange. Thus they would perceive a danger in allowing me to live and might feel it wiser to destroy me. It would come as what you call 'a shock' to learn that consciousness, developed through the mammal, could take this dreadful shape. My information would probably be hushed up and kept from the ears of the young; while if any of the mammalia existed upon Hermes, it is safe to assume that they would be killed at once, to obviate the hideous possibility of mind developing among them."

"Well," admitted Milly, "I'm sure you've never done anything to make us want to wipe out the iguanas. There's a lot to be said for your people no doubt; but I wish they understood pictures. If they had sent us a few snapshots even, they would have been so helpful."

"I am trying to understand pictures," replied Saurus. "I have devoted much time to them, but they belong to art, and art is evidently left out of us. The professor hired a moving picture and displayed it before my eyes, hoping that it might penetrate to my understanding; but the result was a failure. As against this, however, I get glimpses of what can only be called art. They are fleeting and shadowy, yet indicate that there are cells within my brain that might be stimulated to develop an art sense. I dimly comprehend what your uncle calls 'imagery', wherein things seen remind you of deeper things that can only be felt. I read not long since how one Astolpho, wandering amid the antres of the moon, found therein a vast dump of all that had failed or been wasted by the people of earth.

"Every human fatuity that he could imagine lay shattered upon that melancholy scene, and there he found the records of misspent time and wealth, broken vows, unanswered prayers, failure, blunder, frustration, unfulfilled desires, ruined hopes, wasted talent, aborted genius, fruitless tears and all the heartbreak that goes to man's brief sojourn upon this planet.

"I told your mother of this curious narrative and asked if it were authentic; but she replied I was right in assuming that no such thing had ever really happened. Yet her human mind was constituted to appreciate the fable. That impressed me greatly. She said: 'If Astolpho found fruitless tears on the moon, dear Saurus, then there must be water there, after all—probably a large ocean, hidden upon the side that we never see.' I appreciated this in a foggy fashion; yet it can only belong to the domain of art, since it means nothing in the realm of reality."

"Very clever of you," declared Mildred. "You're getting on; but I quite see that it wouldn't be doing you a good turn to send you home again, even if we could. You're only nine or ten months old, anyway, and you may do something for us yet when you get to your prime."

"I am far advanced in life," he replied, "and judge that a year of your time will represent my span."

"You mustn't talk like that," begged Milly. "I hope you are going to be with us for ages yet."

CHAPTER XIII

Saurus could not go upon his uneventful way without causing a sensation.

"It is hateful," explained Norah to him, "but in the vulgar phrase, you continue to be 'news', and an immense deal is written and printed about you, which we spare you, because we know how it wearies you to read anything but philosophy. But you are still accepted as a most remarkable phenomenon and if you were not protected from them, journalists would worry you from morning till night and be a nuisance to us all."

"Men of learning and thoughtful people I am always ready to see," answered Saurus. "That is what you would call my duty, and I shall perform it as long as I can. The professor tells me that he will lecture upon me again presently, and he knows that I will help him to the best of my small powers."

Then Mrs. Hapgood broke the great news.

"You must prepare to see a prince," she said. "We have been informed that one of our royal dukes wishes that you should be presented to him, and he comes to pay you recognition from our sovereign himself. It is a most gracious gesture, for as a rule when the King wants to see anybody, he sends for them; but he knows all about you and understands that you cannot be reasonably asked to go to court. Therefore, with that urbanity for which the royal house is famed, he has directed one of his brothers to visit you in his name."

The iguana made no demur.

"Your dynasty," he wrote, "has long enjoyed the respect, devotion and reverence of the Empire."

"He comes in a fortnight," said Norah, "and on the occasion of such an honour, humble people like ourselves are put to prodigious inconvenience which we are proud to incur. But you always know precisely where you are with royalty, which is such a blessing. You are told when they will come, what refreshment they will require, how you are to pleasure them and when they will go again. One of the supreme blessings in a great social function is to know exactly when people will depart. The duke and his suite take lunch with us; then you will be presented to him by Felix. He will spend thirty minutes with you, and at three o'clock precisely he will return to his car and speed away."

"Shall I offer him some of my fruit?" asked Saurus.

"No; he will have lunched; but we intend to order a handsome silver frame for your cabinet photograph, and my brother thinks that it will be a seemly thing for you to sign the photograph in the duke's presence and beg him to be so good as to present it to His Majesty."

"I will do so," promised Saurus.

"We are already in the thick of the preparations," said Mrs. Hapgood. "The professor considers that his cigars are not up to royal quality and has bought a box of enormous ones costing half a crown each! We are getting very choice wines also and engaging a French chef from the city and trained waiters. Eight persons attend His Royal Highness, but while he is with you they will not be present. He wants just a personal chat and is most anxious to put you to no discomfort or trouble."

"I am never uncomfortable or troubled," replied the iguana. "The duke need be under no concern as to that."

"You'll like him," foretold Norah. "Everybody does; and I feel sure that he will like you, because he is a forthright prince with no humbug about him. There are certain formalities, I believe, on these occasions, but he won't expect them from you. Say just what you think, as you usually do. Don't lecture to him, but reply to his questions in your direct way. The royal family is made of tact, and you may be sure that he won't ask you any question you would not care to answer."

"I would answer any question to which I knew the answer," replied Saurus; "but I will leave the matter in his hands."

"Don't give him a lot of your wonderful little notes to read, and sit and watch him while he reads them," begged Norah. "That might bore him. You are so fond of preparing sheets and sheets of interesting things for visitors to read; but in this case, I should let him guide conversation into his own channels. He is highly intelligent and a man of the world. He won't bother you to tell him about your world, because he quite understands every detail of your wonderful story and knows

your world is hidden from you; but what, I expect, he will like to know is all you think of our world. He may even tell you a little of what he himself thinks about it, which would be most interesting."

"Will he ask me to shake hands?" inquired Saurus.

"I couldn't say, but if he offers to, you must shake, for once in a way," replied Norah. "You can't direct a royal prince in matters of etiquette."

All was in readiness when the great day came and the duke arrived with royal punctuality. He was genial, gracious and affable. He enjoyed his luncheon, drank two glasses of champagne, praised the coffee, asked the brand of his cigar, and put many sagacious questions about Saurus.

With considerable imagination he envisaged the iguana from Mrs. Hapgood's angle of approach, realized the immense difficulties that the stranger's upbringing must have meant for her brother and herself, and congratulated them on their success.

"It was in a way a national duty," he said, "and adequate Government grants, I understand, were made."

The professor explained that various learned societies had assisted him, but not the Government.

"Ah!" said the prince. "Saurus hasn't got a vote. You talk to your Member of Parliament, Professor Toddleben, and tell him to raise the question. An astounding visitor of this kind should command the utmost attention and be an obligation on the country he has honoured with his presence."

An equerry reminded His Royal Highness of a point.

"You read, sir, that Saurus doesn't like shaking hands and you asked me to raise the question," he said.

"He entertains a great aversion from any human touch," explained the professor, "but will, of course, shake hands if Your Royal Highness desires to do so."

"As a matter of fact, I'd rather not—should be horribly nervous," declared the visitor.

In due course the prince and iguana bowed to each other. They then sat down and entered into conversation, the one talking aloud, the other tapping out his answers on his typewriter faster than most people talk. The prince quickly accepted this method of communion and Saurus perceived that he was well-disposed. He gazed upon royalty in his usual placid and unemotional fashion and appreciated the impersonal nature of the interview. For the courteous prince, having assured him of the sensation that he had caused, declared that England would always remember an event without parallel in the world's history and be proud of such a notable visitant, and proceeded to ask such questions only as he thought the lizard might care to answer.

"It is refreshing to learn that you utter your opinions without fear or favour, Mr. Saurus, and thus those who have the good fortune to see you, know that they are winning a more independent opinion of our race than was ever uttered before. I well understand that only our own human knowledge is at your command and, therefore, to some extent the human outlook must be yours also; but you bring to that outlook a point of view which was never until now united with consciousness on our planet, and that is a very wonderful event. You feel no bias and your opinions, emanating from an intellect outside our experience, must always possess deep interest for the human race."

"I can tell your royal highness nothing that man does not know already," wrote Saurus, "but, as you justly remark, the point of view may possess some passing novelty, so pray ask me what questions you may have a mind to."

"I will ask you what I should best like to learn myself," replied the prince. "You are, I hear, among your other gifts, an historian and philosopher. Tell me, then, what you think of our British Empire. What does Iguana Sapiens, as we venture to call you, make of it?"

Saurus began to tap away on his typewriter like lightning and swiftly handed a sheet to the distinguished visitor.

"So large a subject must be approached from three standpoints to do it justice," he began. "You have to consider what your Empire is, what it will be, and what it might have been. It is, in my opinion, the most amazing phenomenon of Earth's story—so far. Other Empires there have been—of Egypt and Babylonia, of Assyria, Greece and Rome; but they

shrink into insignificance beside yours. We have the spectacle of a pin-point island in an inclement clime so charged with dynamic elements that it bursts its narrow bounds, penetrates to the ends of the planet, absorbs territories in both hemispheres, swallows nations and creates a vast commonwealth of united peoples, the like of which was never seen upon Earth until now, and will hardly again be seen.

"A master mind would be needed adequately to explain this wonder and it will be discovered that British rule, though founded on conquest and the customary villainies that conquest must always mean, was joined with a certain quality in the conquerors—a foggy sense of justice, a respect for the oath and an understanding of that abstraction they comprehended in the word 'Liberty'. The people who did these things had already created Habeas Corpus. Themselves nurtured in freedom, they valued this ideal and, having enslaved, offered the hand of friendship, made their word their bond, won a measure of trust and even amity, such as no conquerors had ever won before, and carried the national 'aidos', or spirit of truth and compassion, where lesser nations opposed 'hubris' and unfaith, cruelty and inhuman impositions upon the conquered.

"The concept of liberty would seem to be the highest form of civilization and, though not yet reached and probably impossible of human attainment under any of your existing ideologies, yet Britons still stick to the semblance of it and carry it with them where they chose to go. It argues self-control, respect for the law and a native goodwill that is part of your national genius. It permits a freedom of thought which dictatorships must slay to live. You do not imprison, or torture in secret, or condemn without public hearing; you perceive that to keep the oath is vital to honour and security; you strive to respect all honest convictions and your democratic ideals accord liberty of criticism, liberty of the Press and development of individuality in a manner quite alien to most other regimes. You welcome aliens and persecution is not one of your more shameful crimes, for you never were good haters. The wisdom of the world is at your service, as it is at the service of your fellow men, but as yet you wallow, like everybody else, in sloughs of selfishness—your universal bane—and know not how to banish it. But you have tried; you have offered to lessen your armaments and promote the cause of peace; you have made blundering attempts at goodwill; you have recognized your numberless errors and admitted many of them. The Empire—huge as it is—must work through united governments, and when any fail of sense or equity, the shock may cause the whole mighty machine to tremble; but as yet it continues fairly stable and when, if ever, you weigh yourselves in the scales of relativity and come to understand that principle, then mayhap you will also re-weigh and re-value your good and evil and thus enable your kingdom to enjoy a longer lease than that recorded of any other. Such an ideal may yet lie within the reach of all conscious life; it may well glorify greater planets than yours, or mine; but some closer approach to it should yet be achieved in the millions of years still left at Earth's disposal.

"So you stand," continued Saurus, "but must await the inevitable fate of all kindred empires, since the eternal progress of change and the ultimate certainty of death is at the root of every created institution. Your turn will come, and from the tide-rip of future time new nations will be born to toss upon its surface, while old nations vanish and are sucked down to the darkness of oblivion. The mightier the empire, the more certain that, like a sandhill in an hour-glass, its own development will crumble it away. Your salvation rests upon the light rein with which the mother country rides her prodigious steed; but freedom is as much a dream of each of the members as the whole body and already are apparent disintegrating forces. The gravitation that holds you together must yield anon, and there are active and potent elements at the heart of your venerable race, working unseen, like woodworms, that hate empire and would haste to dismember you with utmost vigour and enterprise once they win their people's will. Socialism toils ceaselessly for the powers your democratic constitution would grant, and that those who support Socialism will be in a position to apply it within some trifling number of years is inevitable. Then the axe must swiftly begin to lop and the saw to cut until all that is left will be a trunk robbed of its life-giving foliage, branch and bough—a stout ruin that may linger long, yet must submit to decay and destruction at the last. Shorn of empire, deprived of wealth, under the control of those who know not your sources of greatness and whose rule has no traditions to support it, your liberty will vanish, your power will pass. You must then experience the ordinary infirmities of old age and sink into the limbo of history for another Gibbon to write your decline and fall. This is not to speak dishonourably concerning you, but to state a certainty beyond reach of question."

Saurus, who had occupied two pages in his reply, ceased tapping and the royal personage read all that he had written and smiled upon him.

"You tell me what we are and shall be, Mr. Saurus," he said. "But you have yet to mention your third point: what we might have been."

The iguana set another piece of paper in his typewriter and swiftly composed a reply.

"There was a time," he wrote, "when North America and the United Kingdom were as parent and child. And then you played the cruel step-mother and lost her love and trust. That England would have won the taxation struggle is certain, but for the fact that America had bred a giant, and under his leadership, against prodigious odds, his country conquered you. Greater than Alexander, Caesar, or Bonaparte is George Washington, for he was called to forge his own weapon and create a force potent enough to win the victory. An aristocrat himself, he knew that the base-born quarrel meant war, and inspired his people to throw off the yoke which a purblind gang of inferior statesmen demanded to set upon it. Everything was against him, yet that rare soldier conquered through a bloody campaign whose details are all too dimly remembered here. America would have crowned him and created a dynasty, but he was too wise to accept any throne save in the hearts of a grateful people. That was your far-flung tragedy: to make Washington your enemy—an error that altered the whole course of Earth's story.

"History repeats itself," concluded Saurus. "Spain found a like answer to her rapacity and lack of vision in South America. She, too, tried to keep a brave young world upon the chain; but her conquest crumbled under her greedy hands, to recreate itself in the great republics that you know."

"I have often thought that if the United States and ourselves could feel as one in trust and faith, we might yet put a girdle round the earth and help to bring about a civilization where war was for ever banned," declared the young prince.

"Together we could even yet do it."

But Saurus shook his head.

"Too late," he replied. "Too late, your royal highness. England is old; America is young and cannot dismiss the past as quickly as you do. There are many spirits in that vast admixture of blood that will never forgive or forget, or learn to trust again. But may your Empire learn her tremendous lesson and keep the mother's apron-strings elastic, so that they shall not break too soon. Freedom is the eternal undying demand of your people, and to deny it is to lose all. Other nations prove happier without freedom and prefer to go in bonds, arguing that temporal efficiency is greater than spiritual liberty; but not so do you face your future fortunes, or see your duty."

"Most interesting," declared the listener. "Somewhat pessimistic, Mr. Saurus, but quite possibly true."

He looked at his watch and spoke again.

"Now be so good, if I am not wearying you, to tell me how you suspect your own civilization must differ from ours—difficult though that must be for you."

"Practically impossible," confessed Saurus. "One has no data to work upon. All that seems certain is that I come from a very tiny world—be it Hermes or Ceres, Pallas or another. A world so small that vast convulsions, conquests and wars of extermination can hardly have occurred there. The creature that you call a lizard is probably at the helm of civilization in that remote planet, and one may deduce that his life is far shorter than yours, but lived under utterly different conditions of law and order, because his reasoning powers are more developed than your own. His values are probably somewhat superior to yours, though doubtless far inferior to those of nobler conscious life in nobler worlds. Good and evil can hardly mean anything to him, but the society of this lizard world is evidently highly organized, and my arrival here represents a knowledge of science in certain directions to which as yet you have not attained. Iguana is without doubt nearer to his remote ancestors than man, and he may have come to a peaceful, tolerant and intelligent existence more swiftly and easily than you find it possible to do. The reptile was perhaps better suited to Nature's final triumph than the species from which you have emerged. Your propensities must give the universe great pain if they are known beyond your dwelling-place, and the discomfort would be combined with surprise to learn the panacea that you have discovered against them, yet decline so resolutely to employ. Doubtless the myriad homes of conscious life have all their own problems—some more thorny than those of Earth, or Hermes, some easier to solve. It is what consciousness brings to life, rather than what life brings to consciousness that spells the destiny of man, lizard and all other reasonable beings. By you the stupendous, abstract ideal of righteousness has been discovered; by greater than you it may have been attained; for us it may have come as part of our natural endowment and created no more comment than a hand with four fingers and a thumb. All that we share with our greater neighbours we cannot know; but that we share with them eternal change and the ultimate certainty of death must be impossible of question."

"You would consider that you were a step higher up the ladder than we are, then?" inquired the duke.

"Not for a moment," replied Saurus quickly. "You have, it is true, ruined your earth, fouled your sea and air and done many abominations; there is much that every other animal must find offensive about you, as I do; but one feels that, lacking reason, you might have been quite as harmless and agreeable as the other great apes. Yet reason is in a measure justified, for with its aid you have risen to such heights of goodness, such devotion, such self-sacrifice upon occasion, such noble causes, such generous and sublime dreams that you may far exceed our more modest status, devoid alike of your temptations to wickedness and your occasional displays of virtue. We probably have no martyrs, just as we have none capable of making martyrs. A mechanic perfection is likely to reign in my world without any inducements to noble conduct, violent villainy, or subversive and volcanic opinions leading to common extermination. Thus we gain and lose. I perceive that evil can be very beautiful and goodness very ugly, while the converse is also true. These facts breed your wonderland of art—an unknown world to us, no doubt. But what is unknown is unmissed, and though we experience neither happiness nor misery, we probably enjoy a measure of peace and absence from fear and want and care that would mean glorious happiness to most of you."

"If bidden to choose between the rainbow magic of good and evil and the more modest lustre of peace and security, one guesses which most of my brother's subjects would prefer," answered the visitor. "And now, before I leave you, Mr. Saurus, I have a message from the monarch. He is desirous to bestow upon you the Order of the British Empire, and though your opinions on that institution are a little depressing, I beg you may see your way to accept it, and believe me when I assure you that the Empire will last your time and my own."

But Saurus declined with his customary courtesy.

"I am honoured," he replied, "yet, if His Gracious Majesty would do me a favour, may I beg a distinction for my faithful supporter and the King's loyal subject, Professor Toddleben? To him I owe everything, and to him a worldly honour would signify recognition of the most gratifying nature, whereas to me it must mean nothing at all."

The prince promised to keep Felix in mind and then took a kindly farewell as Mrs. Hapgood and her brother appeared punctually to attend him to his motor car. Together they walked beside him and he commented on his unusual experience.

"One's emotion," he said, "is a sort of sorrow for this stranded and isolated little being. Yet there is a human side to him—a glimmer of benevolence that I had hardly expected."

"Not natural to him, but a result of his human upbringing, sir," explained the professor.

"He suspects that he is developing a sense of humour, Your Royal Highness," said Norah, and the prince thought it quite possible.

"To live in England, even for ten months, might be likely to awaken a gleam of that," he declared.

"None sees more to laugh at than a royal duke, no doubt," ventured Norah.

"Plenty," he agreed, "but all the very funniest things happen when laughing is out of the question. From infancy we are sternly trained never to laugh when we feel most like it."

CHAPTER XIV

Philosophy and fruit continued to be the prime interests of Saurus. A new fruit always excited his attention, and when Norah brought him ripe pomegranates one morning, he consumed them thoughtfully and declared that they were full of desirable vitamins.

"Pray endeavour to procure some more if it lies in your power," he wrote. "They possess a tonic quality and may provide me with valuable brain food."

She smiled and was about to leave him, for his disquisitions often wearied her. Income-tax had risen to five and sixpence in the pound and Mrs. Hapgood was called to face various other problems that philosophy lacked any power to solve; but the iguana detained her, and she sighed and submitted to listen. It was a quality of Saurus that he always supposed any matter interesting to himself must present equal challenge for everybody else. He never knew when he bored people, his lot being happily cast among those whose ancient traditions had taught them to conceal such emotion.

After the pomegranates Saurus washed his face and hands in a little bowl of water, then dried himself and picked up a page or two of typed notes.

"I have here," he wrote, "certain ideas concerning your human ideologies. I submitted them to the professor yesterday, but he looked at his watch and much regretted that he was, as you say, 'pressed for time'. I gleaned his meaning and he hastened away. Perhaps, however, you are not 'pressed for time'? Mankind is rich in time-saving inventions, but not, as a rule, very clever at using the time they save."

Norah yielded, concealed a sigh, untruthfully declared that it would give her genuine entertainment to hear what he thought about human ideologies, was thankful that he had typed his ideas and not written them in his microscopic script and sat down to wade through them.

"An interesting fact to me," began Saurus, "is this: that countless millions of men have proudly perished for ideologies long since as dead as they are. Yet all in their turn threw up ruling spirits, who personified them in the eyes of the people. A Socialist State demands precisely the same human symbols as that of Fascist or Nazi, and the same surrender of human liberties if it is to succeed. The freedom of thought, of speech and of action represented by your democracy means, for a dictator, only pitiful waste of time, as your Cromwell discovered long ago. A dictator recognizes no party but his own and attains to immensely increased progress by purging that party of any doubtful element. He anticipates the shadow of change and often saves himself by so doing. Your clumsy and archaic system of party government, your Houses of Parliament, or Council of State, are as a theatre wherein the plays are badly written and the padding interminable. Such outworn mummery is often quite childish, and democracy pursued upon these lines becomes but another name for mediocracy and imperfection, because its pretence of freedom and equality are at variance with the facts of life. As well order the trees in a forest to attain like stature as tell the sons of men to be equal. The great spring up to their appointed height and the less find real or fancied security within their shadows. The less may slay the greater, as the ivy slays the oak; but prodigious men there will always be, and no regime is proof against them or capable of existence without them. Democracy, pushed through Socialism to Communism, blossoms into autocracy and breeds its tyrants whether a nation likes it or not, and every ideology in Europe proclaims the fact. Might will continue to be arbiter, and right can never triumph until some theory of universal and stable righteousness, above the power of any dictator to destroy, wins a welcome in the welter and a chance to show whether liberty is in truth your heritage.

"Dictators and monarchs have not seldom been noble men who began wisely and earned support, until overpowered at last by their own power. Then they plunge themselves and their nations into wickedness by developing megalomania and imparting the rabies to the people. Such men are like your gods. They lay down the law for others, but remain outside it themselves, enjoying a liberty that can only exist where kingdoms are enslaved in fear or superstition, for the machinery that keeps a tyrant on his throne is always vile.

"Far higher theories than those that inspire any living dictator await their turn of trial; but men must forgather on firmer ground and in purer air if they would prove them, or weigh the Golden Rule in the balance and discover it to be more than a phantom of impossible perfection. Yet good faith would take you half-way there.

"Good faith is a vital preliminary to progress, still rendered useless in State affairs because your dictatorial kingdoms refuse validity to their promises or sanctity to their oaths. But what would happen in a workaday world if the pledge

were non-existent? Trust is at the bottom of all communion and common honesty must be the corner-stone of civilization since every rational, human relationship depends upon it. From the greatest to the least it operates; from your Stock Exchanges, where millions change hands at a spoken word, to the acrobat in mid-air, whose existence depends upon the arms stretched to receive him. Every efficient service turns upon good faith between employer and employed; yet what is instantly proclaimed as a crime leading to your law courts between man and man becomes a matter of daily commission between nation and nation—a diplomatic move to be allowed for, expected and guarded against. The lie is accepted as a counter in the game, and fidelity to your 'axis', or compact, or covenant, evaporates like a morning mist when the wind changes.

"How shall charity and good willing, truth and honour and tolerance be built upon such rascally foundations? What hope exists where falsehood and opportunism, distrust and the eternal battle for greater temporal might rule your hearts and brains until you drift again into the bloody arbitration of war? Yet where is the kingdom that desires to send its rising generation to sudden death? Why are you all wasting human labour and the world's wealth in building machinery to commit mass murder—creatures that for half a million years and more have been endowed with reason—conscious beings who discovered a better way long centuries ago?

"Ponder now as to what would happen if, as the young prince suggested, but two of your pre-eminent world powers agreed to try the Golden Rule with whole heart between themselves, setting it higher than politics, above the chicane of the chancellories and the solemn farce of treaties only made to be broken. Conceive of absolute trust as a living, growing reality and abiding principle between the British Empire and the United States of America. Imagine the past forgotten and forgiven, the present employed in creation of such goodwill that the future must bear an evangel burning with hope for all mankind. Dream of statesmen mighty enough to bring so vast and splendid an achievement into being! Such an example of new values would alter the face of earth and take man a long march forward upon the road to a righteousness above all ideologies, and a status perhaps alone equal to facing the eternal changes that time must bring along with it. Such a union might well lead to others until dominion by fear was no longer a poison in the brain and a thorn in the flesh of man.

"As masterpieces of the Golden Age outlast the ages and defy Time, so might this discovery of the Golden Rule do likewise for you, and prove a pharos and abiding light through your darkness so long as you exist. What moral guides and ruling precepts consciousness may enjoy in greater worlds you cannot learn; but for you charity, combined with faith in yourselves and that undying hope which is implicit in all of you, may well answer every purpose and make the way saner and safer for your posterity than at present it promises to be."

Norah had nearly finished and set herself to make a final sprint over what remained; but now came an interruption, and while she heard mournful howls and a soft, heavy padding at the outer door, Saurus, though he heard nothing, was already more aware of events than she.

"It is 'Rex', the Great Dane. He is troubled and has been injured. Admit him instantly," he wrote.

Mrs. Hapgood obeyed, and a melancholy hound entered and flung himself at the iguana's feet. They were long become fast friends, and at his hour of need 'Rex' had thought upon Saurus, and in his canine fashion explained his woe. Now the superior creature set down what had happened that Norah might take needful steps.

"'Rex'," he wrote, "operating in the paddock, perceived a long and glittering object that showed hate and hissed at him. He pounced upon it, judging it an enemy from which life had better be taken as swiftly as possible, but, ignorant of its nature, he underrated its powers. He bit off the end that hissed at him and destroyed the snake, yet not before it had struck him in the breast, and now its venom is at work in his blood and he is feeling very ill indeed."

"An adder has stung him," cried Norah. "I will fetch the professor at once."

She hastened to do so, and meantime 'Rex' lay panting and much indisposed beside the little chair of Saurus, who bent down and patted him. He would have given his friend comforting and hopeful thoughts, but 'Rex' was unable to receive impressions though the proximity of the great lizard brought him trust and a doggy hope that all might yet be well.

Felix arrived with a big bowl and a bottle of whiskey, while Norah poured water into the bowl and her brother added a generous amount of spirits.

"Whether he will drink it remains to be seen," said the professor; "but all may turn on that. He is a large and powerful

brute and should withstand the venom; but in snakebite a good rule is to treat one poison with another, and if we can make the Dane very drunk he will probably recover. The problem is to make him drink."

"Dogs," wrote Saurus, "are better linguists than men. They understand your directions from your speech, though you have never mastered theirs. Command him to drink. Tell him that only so will his life continue and his happiness return. He is an obedient hound and will do as you bid him."

Thus encouraged, Felix urgently ordered 'Rex' to lap up the spirits, and though he coughed a little he appeared to understand the need and drank until the bowl was empty. The professor then gave him a second and a stronger dose, while Norah and Saurus waited to see the result. It soon appeared, for on a system that knew not alcohol, the second poison presently began to operate against the first. A third time the professor made his Great Dane drink, and presently, when at last 'Rex' tottered, subsided and desired to sleep, he was pronounced out of danger.

"The whiskey has conquered the adder's venom," said Felix. "I think our patient will now slumber heavily for several hours and, when he awakens, may still feel poorly and very sorry for himself, but soon return to normal health."

"Leave him where he is," directed Saurus, "and I shall do nothing to disturb him."

For many hours the dog remained unconscious, but when evening came he awoke, received congratulations on his recovery and was led away to be tempted with food and rejoice in the comfort of his kennel. He often visited the iguana after this adventure, and when Saurus knew that 'Rex' was at his outer door he would open it at once and never deny him entrance.

CHAPTER XV

There came a morning when summer reigned again and, during breakfast, Norah asked an exceedingly curious question. Felix was not at his best on the occasion and had slept ill—an unusual incident. When in good health and spirits the professor enjoyed a sausage, stewed kidneys, or eggs and bacon with his morning mail, and opened his letters while he ate; but upon days that he awoke pensive, depressed, or otherwise perturbed, he was wont to eat an insipid cereal with hot milk and ignore his post altogether. To-day, in silence, he toyed with this unpretentious fare, and Mrs. Hapgood endeavoured to interest him.

"Would a person's birthday," she asked, "be on the day they were laid, or on the day they were hatched?"

Felix stared at her and went as near scowling as he ever did.

"Since we are not oviparous, the question doesn't arise," he snapped.

"Oh, yes, it does," she answered. "I was quite aware of that, my love; but, as you yourself are so fond of saying, we are not the only pebbles on the beach, are we? I refer, of course, to Saurus. We don't know when the poor fellow was laid, so it will be best, no doubt, to celebrate his birthday on the anniversary of the day he was hatched; and that is Tuesday week. One can hardly believe he has been with us a whole year."

"One cannot," granted Felix rather drearily. "For my own part I feel that he might well have been here ten. His arrival marks an epoch in our existence and has been fraught with much anxiety and expense, if not actual tribulation."

"And yet he is only a year old," she said.

"He is far older than that—one might almost say aged," replied the professor. "Time for him means something utterly different from what it means to us. Time is, in fact, an illusive invention of our own and I don't pretend to understand it. While it races for him, the fact remains that it has dragged interminably for me of late, if not for you."

"It does seem a long while since he arrived," admitted Norah. "He has become part of our scheme of things—one of the family, you might almost say. We regard him from opposite angles, of course. To you he has certainly meant a prodigious amount of work, study and attention; to me he has been a more or less pleasant interest. He doesn't always bore me and, of course, I can never forget that he saved my dear child's life. But I shouldn't call him 'aged' yet—just elderly."

"He considers that, on a human estimate, he is about seventy-five; that was his own opinion," answered the professor. "He asked me if that were a long life for members of the iguana family and I told him that it was. 'In captivity and with every care and attention, however,' I added, 'there is no reason why they should not live longer.' 'A true word,' he wrote. 'I am, as you say, in captivity.' He considered that he might live another six months, but he has none of that enthusiasm for existence which most of us entertain, even though we pretend otherwise."

"I cannot imagine Applewood without him now," declared Norah. "I believe he will make quite a dreadful gap in our lives when he does go."

"He hoped to create a synthesis of all the human wisdom that he has collected," explained Felix, "but now he admits that time will be lacking for such a huge enterprise. He is devoting his remaining energy to our religions. He studies comparative theology with his usual open mind and looks forward to his coming talk with the colonial bishop."

"I hope they won't worry one another?" asked Norah.

"Far from it. His lordship has a fine sense of humour and Saurus is quite a liberal thinker; but he cannot conceive our difficulties, because he does not share them. The humanity and hope of great pagans, like Seneca and Cicero, fill him with admiration; but the baffling fact that the humanists, despite their sense of justice and benevolence, have wakened no throb of response in subsequent generations of mankind, puzzles him and makes him feel that science may, after all, hold the key of our future regeneration, when itself regenerated. Not only discoveries, but the implications of those discoveries, are demanded from science, and she must cultivate a heart, which she painfully lacks."

"All very obscure," declared Norah. "Now read your post. There is a massive-looking official letter that rather intrigues me."

Felix responded and opened a communication from high quarters, with startling effect. He stared, changed colour, gazed into space, then returned to his senses, shrugged his shoulders and fixed his eyes upon his sister.

"Oh dear!" she exclaimed, "what has happened to you now, darling?"

"Read," he answered and handed the missive to her.

Professor Toddleben was invited to accept the honour of a knighthood 'for his own highly distinguished services to science and his devotion and remarkable success in accommodation of Iguana Sapiens, now domiciled under terrestrial circumstances'.

While Mrs. Hapgood received this glad news its effect on Felix became manifest. He deserted his melancholy cereal, arose, inspected a hot dish, lifted the cover and helped himself to a portion of grilled salmon. The act indicated that he was a proud man.

They purred together for some time, and Norah kissed her brother and declared the distinction no more than deserved.

"Had it been merely because I have managed the affair of Saurus with discretion, I do not think I should have accepted it," declared the professor. "That was an accident—the happening of chance—and others would have been as efficient as myself. You, indeed, are far more to be thanked than I am—as Saurus did not hesitate to tell me. But the proposed addition insists upon my personal and distinguished services to science. It would therefore be ill-mannered to decline."

"You mustn't dream of declining," she answered. "Let me see what you say when you reply. You are a famous man and would have got something, in any case, pretty soon. I've been expecting it for years, as a matter of fact; but you never would court the limelight or make enough of yourself in scientific circles. Now Saurus has brought the matter to a head—high time, too."

"The prince offered him the Order of the British Empire," said Felix, "but he begged to be excused—or so he told me."

"Anything he says is true," declared Norah, "because he doesn't know how to tell a lie—even a white lie. He hasn't the art."

Later in the day she brought fresh fruit to Saurus and told him the news; wherein it appeared that though he could not lie, he had imbibed a human sense of diplomacy to keep the truth to himself upon occasion. After hearing what Norah had to tell him he made no mention of his own good offices, being sufficiently acute to guess that they must dim the lustre now shining about his friends.

"If you and the professor are pleased," he wrote, "then I am also pleased, for he will surely make a handsomer and wiser knight than many who have come to see me."

The professor was not called to wait until the next outpouring from the fountains of honour, but presently directed to appear before his sovereign; and during his absence from home the bishop came to see Saurus. Norah introduced them and left them together, while the prelate smoked his pipe and the iguana scribbled responses to questions, or elaborated his own ideas. Aware that humour must be wasted, His Grace preserved a serious attitude to the unique situation, though sometimes disposed to laugh at an experience so singular. The good bishop had devoted much thought to his pending interview, and even considered whether any conscious being other than mankind might be reasonably converted to his own faith. Nor could he recognize any valid objection to such a missionary effort; but he found the visitant from Hermes possessed of theories which rendered the hope faint. Yet none might have quarrelled with the iguana's respectful and sincere attitude before the mysteries that he had studied; though his own opinions concerning them proved subversive, since he had reached a standpoint whence argument became impossible, because no premises could be found from which to start. Saurus was humble and confessed his natural ignorance when entering a world outside his experience and beyond his lizard comprehension; but he brought the power of reasoning to his task and an ultimate conviction with which his companion found it impossible to differ.

The bishop began and told how he, too, was a student of the past.

"One is always so sorry," he said, "that the great Darwin received such a frosty reception from the churches, because, as I see it, if ever a divine institution revealed the ruling principle of evolution, religion is that identical institution. Remember how it advanced from the ancient dawn, where fear, born of ignorance, peopled earth and sky with unseen

and unfriendly spectres. Then Egypt and Crete, Greece and Rome created their pantheons and the people chose, from a household of gods and goddesses, a tutelary saviour and protector. In their turn these theologies and beliefs—so childish to us—went their way, and religion became exalted and purified as the centuries passed, until the sublime knowledge that only one true god existed was vouchsafed to man."

Saurus held up his paw and began to write.

"Other knowledge there also came," he said. "Seers of vital significance arose whose rede took a different shape and who sought to banish evil by appeal to the possibilities in man rather than through the anger of the gods. Think first upon Gautama, whose love and pity for errant mankind established a faith least stained of them all by subsequent cruelty and fanatical atrocities. The Buddha—the Enlightened One—lived and taught a universal charity, which his most zealous supporters were unable to turn into a scourge for subsequent generations. His four-fold way demanded escape from evil-doing, banishment of ignorance, unkindness and heresy. As a mother, at risk of her own life, watches over her child, so must the devout Buddhist exert ceaseless good willing to all created things. Your Golden Rule of universal tolerance and charity is the peak and pinnacle of such a faith, and those who have not attained to it are unready to enter Nirvana, complete the circle of their own existence and reach the perfect peace from which they emerged. Here is a rule of conduct which, by its intense humanity and appeal to all that is best within humanity, found widest acceptance from mankind, but even as in your own faith and that founded by Mohammed, Buddhism fell far short of the tenets laid down by the founder. That is the story of every religion since the disciple can never reach those heights whereon the masters moved. The mightier the revelation, the less likely to be kept clean. Impurities gather upon it, as moss upon the stone. Human corruptions destroy; human weakness brings the rot to the precious fabric; human short-sightedness fastens upon the vessel and neglects its contents. Yet, though now losing ground as it drifts to ultimate destruction, dying in a twilight of lazy, ignorant monks among the lamaseries of the East, your Buddha's sublime revelation continues worthy of utmost reverence. I see it as the melancholy ghost of a great faith that, had you understood it, might have made of Earth another place than you have made. Religions drift through the generations of human kind as comets across the sky, and so vanish away; but not one lacked for living wisdom; not one has failed to play its part in the evolution which you admit."

"And what would you judge to be the moral principles that your own people respect in Hermes?" inquired the bishop.

"As to that I cannot say, save through my own very doubtful guesses," replied Saurus. "Probably the greatest thing that science upon Hermes has done for the inhabitants is to banish fear, thus making us what you would call courageous as a matter of course. Religion has not as yet banished supernatural fear, or the instinctive dread of death from your species. Myself I dwell heartily and abundantly in this alien world, and as I reach my tether's end, feel a desire for my earthly companions in consciousness that they also shall live more heartily and abundantly than they seem to do. I find myself profoundly interested for mankind and actuated by what you would call 'hope' that your unborn will enjoy a wider measure of that happiness you all seek than at present exists on Earth. I would wish for you that there may be enough happiness to go round in time to come, and I recognize that happiness must be a desirable ambition for the sons of men. Their error is to seek it from sensation, whereas I suspect it can only be discovered in sincerity, which is much neglected. Few among you can be called sincere. For us, we know not happiness, or misery, triumph or failure, laughter or tears, sorrow or joy, beauty or ugliness; truth or falsehood.

"There may in past time have been a lizard god to whom our forefathers paid their worship and devotion; but I should judge that we have now reached a point where we were contented to leave that question in abeyance, as one only capable of proof by deity itself."

"You picture a colourless world and a terribly drab existence," declared the bishop. "And what do you conceive atones for such a dreary, dead-level and monotonous state of affairs?"

"A condition of equilibrium that Earth must for ever lack," explained Saurus. "A state of contentment. I hold no brief for such a state, but I see quite clearly that it is impossible on Earth, because even those who dwell in fortresses of wealth and good health must, since they are human, look out upon a world of unhappiness and therefore feel discontented. To be contented on a planet where evil so often conquers good would be inhuman. Only a devil could be contented when he enjoys a bird's-eye view of humanity, and a contented man would be a monster. Even I, who probably come from a contented home, am robbed of all contentment when I read your history.

"As for evil," proceeded Saurus. "No doubt it came into this world with consciousness and may have done the like in mine. But evil, if it ever existed there, is outgrown in Hermes—perhaps forgotten. It is outgrown for my species because

I think no evil and could do no evil; which seems to prove that the quality of our reasoning powers must already be somewhat in advance of yours. You still wallow in systems of thought and action that win no applause from your own greatest prophets; you still suffer from diseases of the mind, which may have been inseparable from the infancy of consciousness, but to which you should long since have become immune. Your religions have so far failed to set you on any eternal foundations, and the factor which should control all others is ignored. Morality and Justice continue to be words so vague that not two of you would define them alike. Your religions are split into cliques and divided against themselves so that even their hierophants cannot unite in one triumphant onward march for righteousness. Instead they fiercely differ upon questions of unimaginable unimportance until the patient flock begins to think that its bell-wethers jangle nought but cracked bells. You are, in truth, denying the rights of evolution to your faith with the inevitable result."

"There I can prove you mistaken," replied the bishop firmly. "We of my faith are not standing still, believe me."

"Doubtless you refer to the recent report of your Commissioners on Church Doctrine," wrote Saurus. "A most important pronouncement, and one must have read it more than once to presume to talk about it. I found its conclusions exceedingly impressive from my detached standpoint, and no doubt they appealed to certain factions of your community. But surely they startled many others out of their senses. If this, indeed, be evolution, then you must agree that it takes a most unexpected shape and proceeds by jumping over vital obstacles that one had deemed insurmountable."

"How so?" asked the visitor, and Saurus produced the Report from among his papers.

"Your modernists," he wrote, "are admitted to be of highest intellectual status in your cult; but to what terrific conclusions have they come! They hold that your deity is finite, or limited, and that His powers only permitted Him to create man as a being subject to the eternal conflict of good and evil. Thus right and wrong must be recognized as part of the divine endowment, for so alone is it logically possible to explain either of them. They are the price humanity is called to pay for existence; but man still has it in his power and provenance to conquer evil, if so he will, and thus achieve the eternal happiness that victory ensures.

"That is the conclusion of your modernist Christians—the direct opposite of earlier theologians who held that separate deities were responsible for good and evil, and fought a ceaseless battle for the human soul. But having banished the Prince of Darkness, evil demanded to be explained differently."

"To dismiss hell and repudiate the Apostle Paul appeal to me as reasonable evidences of evolution," declared the bishop.

"Most reasonable," agreed Saurus; "but not evolutionary. Such conclusions tend rather to show that your faith must presently yield to the laws that for ever govern all faiths. Already the nations begin to pass beyond its ambit and 'Christendom' becomes a meaningless term. When the outskirts are relinquished, the citadel is quickly endangered. Evolution marches forward over a pathway paved with outworn creeds, each in itself a sign that ethical and spiritual forces have inspired human progress and served to elevate your standards. But, as you emerged from a lower animal, so your concept of righteousness will ultimately rise clear from the mists of ignorance and fear whence all your faiths took shape.

"Creeds," concluded Saurus, "I conceive to be the scaffolding needful to build the ultimate temple, and as yet you glimpse the fane of pure righteousness through a network of myth and superstition that conceals it. They will fall away until your children's children may live to worship the reality of goodness and discover the sanctity of man."

"We have never doubted the reality of goodness," declared the bishop. "Man has always been quite aware that such reality exists; but he also knew very well that it lay beyond his power to attain it single-handed."

"Not after he discovered the Golden Rule," replied Saurus, "for out of charity is begotten trust, and were trust achieved, then half your self-created difficulties vanish. Why is it denied you to trust one another? Why cannot your adolescence cast off the clouts of babyhood? Grovel and be hopeless and shamefaced no more; recognize the good health of good willing; substitute original virtue for original sin and from that sound, sweet soil germinate thought for the unborn. Make of human life the supremely sacred thing and devote your wondrous endowment of human love to worship at that altar. The Golden Rule, while it confounds all your present values and interests, can offer no opposition to such a faith. You discovered it yourselves and, even in the welter of eternal change, I fail to see how it diminishes. Rather does it endure beyond the scope of time—in imperishable principle of wisdom that was never young and never old. While you men were trying to turn base metals into precious ones and seeking the elixir of life, your gold and your elixir were already a

commonplace of knowledge, only waiting application, only denied their magic by your own unfortunate propensities which rendered them of no account. You have a saying that to cast cheesecakes to a pig is folly; and shall the universe, gazing upon your little home with not unfriendly eyes, determine that man was the pig—a creature so elementary that his own immense discovery lies for ever beyond his power to comprehend?"

"Emphatically not," replied the prelate—"not for a moment, my dear fellow. None shall ever convince me that the nature of things opposes this sublime direction, or the complexity of human affairs has rendered it null and void. A precept such as this is far greater than any evanescent convictions and theories of conduct we adhere to, for they are ever changing; while, as you say, The Rule knows no change."

"It is the foundation of all good willing," replied Saurus, "and did you draw together in that spirit, not a dictator of them all, no matter what his powers and pretensions, dare abstain from entering such a conference, or condemn his nation to remain outside it. To decline would shatter his throne and destroy his dominion. Once found politics on principle and half your huge difficulties would disappear. You have worshipped idols so long that you may be called to make prodigious sacrifices before such a covenant could be created; but with waxing intelligence you could not fail to perceive that your sacrifice was of the things that did not matter, instead of, as at present, the things that do matter. To-day, for love of peace, you sacrifice principle; but once accept the paramount principle of charity and mercy; once agree that the created have a right to live and the rulers no right to take their lives from them; once enlarge your sympathies to embrace your kind as well as your kinship, then no wisdom of true human worth will again demand to be sacrificed, but only those false and pitiful values that still betray you."

"Did such a notable conference ever come to be held," answered the bishop, "then assuredly we might feel that those who have taught and fought for the Golden Rule had, at long last, succeeded in their inspired quest. You mustn't ask yet for international sympathies from creatures so limited in any sympathy at all as we are; but if we can all begin to develop something like a modest respect for the people next door and seek to share their hopes and fears, that would do for a start."

They continued to agree; and then came Norah with tea for the bishop and some freshly arrived West Indian mangoes for Saurus. Both enjoyed their meal and while the latter ate without his usual observance of manners (for it is practically impossible to be mannerly when engaged upon mangoes) the bishop talked of temporal affairs with Mrs. Hapgood and presently took his leave, assuring his host that he should hope to see him again before returning to South Africa.

When alone with her, he expressed his interest and considered his experience to be not disagreeable.

"Upon the whole," he said, "I liked the strange little being. He is, I find, an agnostic iguana and takes a view of certain questions that cannot commend itself to any of us. But I should be inclined to say that he is on the side of the angels, though I fear he doesn't as yet believe in them. Yet his ideals are lofty and, of course, would be much loftier if he knew where they really come from. What the lizard people think and how they may conduct themselves in Hermes is, of course, as unknown to him as it is to ourselves; but he is disposed to believe that they have achieved universal contentment. It sounds a miserable place it he is right. Our own difficulties of commerce and trade and distribution, and our inherent dislike of foreigners and the lesser breeds, are naturally hidden from him, though as a colonial bishop, exceedingly well known to me; but we did not touch on those matters. Whether it is either possible or desirable to approach him, as I have approached the negro, and devote some spiritual energy to converting him, is a question that it will be my duty to consider."

"I shouldn't try, your lordship," answered Norah. "You have no common ground to start from."

"Oh, yes, we have—a very sound common ground," he answered. "But Saurus attributes the Golden Rule to man's unassisted mental evolution, whereas you and I know better. My terms of reference to Omnipotence represent the difficulty, and if I could prevail upon him to grant them, the battle would very probably be won and the creature saved."

"Have you any reason to believe that he is lost?" ventured Norah. "He and I discussed the hereafter quite recently and he said a rather curious thing. He remarked that we appeared to regard the next world as planned and arranged for our noble selves alone. It struck him as another example of our incurable selfishness."

"Of course, he proves in his own bizarre person that the universe contains more conscious creatures than mankind," admitted the bishop, "but charity begins at home, if it ever begins anywhere, and we have a right to assume that the Happy Land, whatever and wherever it may be, is hardly likely to resemble the Zoological Gardens."

Norah hastened to agree.

"No, no—one quite sees that would never do," she said, "though one has met many keen animal-lovers who would like nothing better."

CHAPTER XVI

When the professor returned and again appeared before Saurus, the iguana rose from his little chair, bowed and then took up his pencil.

"I salute Sir Felix Toddleben," he wrote, "and trust that he may live long to enjoy being a knight."

It was the most human achievement that Felix could remember to the visitor's credit and he expressed cordial thanks, then entered into a description of his experience.

"The solemn rite that accompanied my reception of this dignity exalted it," he declared, "for to stand in the presence of your sovereign is a memorable event. Dictators may rule and in that capacity demand your obedience and respect; but a king reigns, which is quite another matter; and while he continues to enjoy the love and respect of his people, he is the heart of his empire. The throne still denotes a symbol, a cynosure, and standard, a rallying-point which no base-born being, whatever his genius, can represent."

"Archaic, but quite comprehensible," replied Saurus.

He then listened to his host without further comment and, when the professor had finished, informed him of his own present interests.

"There are two matters concerning which I must invite your attention," he began. "One directly concerns myself and is therefore of no importance to me, but may challenge you; while the other and far more attractive consideration belongs to philosophy. I have set forth on a new survey and envisaged new ideas; but when it came to means by which the human plight was to be bettered and the general oppressive atmosphere sweetened, I could find no better remedy to take the place of your old neglected prescription."

He handed Felix a sheet, and seeing that it was not very lengthy, the professor, in a benignant mood, sat down to peruse it. Meantime the iguana squatted upon the hearth-rug close to his electric stove, for the day was cold.

"The problem is to find the sources of this universal poison," had written Saurus. "From the East came your high thinking while the West was still in mental infancy; but whereas Oriental thought made no deep mark upon you, your culture, when it came, vitiated the East and your new wine burst the old bottles. To-day men like Gandhi and your Lord Halifax, who is the British Gandhi, speak to the void, for righteousness is at bitter odds with the leaders of mankind just now, and those who seek to enforce dictatorships of Right or Left are no longer concerned with questions of morality.

"Take Japan. Of old, honour was her watchword and art her glory. She was poor, distinguished and very wise. The world respected her. But the West poisoned her wisdom with its glittering examples of wealth, conquest and temporal power. She leapt at the virus with good appetite and she stands to-day soaked in European culture, robbed of her honour, dead to her great traditions and under the heel of her butchers after the Occidental fashion. While earth sets brute force higher than reason, your future is dark indeed, and it might be an attractive dream, for the artist possessed of sufficient imagination, to picture a human Utopia ruled by reason alone—a world where the demand for increasing population had ceased, where man-power was measured in terms of brain-power, where quality counted higher than quantity, where the problem of distribution was solved and where cleanliness and decency and self-respect had become matters of course. Such a world would pass from peace to freedom—a condition alien to its present plight. At present the one can only be enjoyed at the cost of the other and freedom must be fought for, or surrendered in exchange for peace. Ninety-nine of every hundred among you probably desire peace, while the balance may hold war a condition to be preferred; but what can be the mental norm of statesmanship where such a minority conquer the peace-lovers? What shall be thought of a generation that sees in competition rather than co-operation a way to happiness and contentment? You won your Great War by pooling your resources, and only by pooling does it appear possible to avoid another. Is a Parliament of Mankind beyond your powers? No Hague tribunal of lawyers, which interprets but cannot legislate; no League of Nations, seeking to control forces that know it not; but a new union born of your universal needs and created upon principles of righteousness so sublime that none could abstain from a place therein without shame.

"Geneva has read the riot act so often, and only seen those desirous to riot desert her. Ideas of an international police have occupied your minds—a body to serve great and small states alike, as your policemen are always ready and willing to do at every street corner. But the League of Nations possesses no power to create such a body, because no

mandate exists for it in the minds of men. Your League was still-born, for you forbade your beaten foe to enter it and, from its inception, Wilson was powerless to win his own great nation's support. It died when the United States of America declined to join, and at no time did it possess other than moral value, worthless upon an amoral earth. The writ of the Covenant never ran in the bloody and smarting spirits of victor or vanquished, for the League was but a new religion among the old, and since religion has ever been a divider, for all its grandeur of conception, your League only awakened troublesome problems where none existed, created confusion and grief, aroused false hopes, confounded exalted principles and still places many of the just and high-minded spirits who support it in a position that must be odious to them.

"You have accepted as yet no rules of conduct or principles of action common to all men and vital alike to your heads and hearts. There is no philosophy in sight—no emergent evolution of pure righteousness—capable of opposing and composing your militant ideologies; and no overwhelming inspiration equal to killing the dragon of war, as your knights of old set forth to slay the monsters of those days, and so restore peace to humble and distracted countrysides. No; it would seem that war is not to be destroyed, and you must be content to hope that it may soon die a natural death. Evolution is willing, life is willing, reason is willing to let it die, and your virtues, if practised, would swiftly create an atmosphere wherein charity and ruth might flourish, but war lose all motive to exist."

Sir Felix dropped the document.

"Very interesting but unfortunately quite inconclusive," he said, "for the reason that long before war dies a natural death, it will have condemned the bulk of humanity to a sudden one. 'Emergent righteousness' sounds a very fine phrase, but whence is it going to emerge? The evolution of morals is seriously doubted to-day, and with very good reasons in my opinion. We elderly people—you and I alike—must not, of course, make the mistake of supposing that the good old past was much superior to the harsh and bad present; but I at least can remember a time when war itself was fought in a gentlemanly manner, subject to its own rules—a beast, but more or less a just beast. To-day the filthy thing is as a pestilence brooding over the mind and soul of humanity, a threat confounding our international progress and prosperity, and the handful of individuals responsible for this threat should be treated like the madmen they are and incarcerated or destroyed. Only in nations with the heart of lice are they bred, and whatever you may say about democracy, it is at least proof so far against dictatorial infection. Democratic ideals if they produce no national heroes can point to many a national saint and reveal our only hope of human freedom."

After these vigorous sentiments the professor turned to Saurus.

"Now let me hear about yourself, which will interest me much more than your endless lamentations over us," he said.

The iguana bowed and handed him another page of writing.

"My instinct is to avoid the personal as being of no possible importance in the cosmic scheme," he wrote, "but while the danger at present hanging over me causes me no inconvenience of mind and my own future conditions and duration of life possess very small material for interest, to you I believe they may. Briefly then, it is proposed to kidnap me, remove me in secret from my present surroundings and exploit me to the advantage of persons unknown. Your first concern must be to hear how I have learned this fact. As a student of human nature this was the real challenge, and from it one arrived at interesting conclusions. A woman informed me of the proposed adventure and passed the matter into my brain. She communicated her knowledge in the usual way, approached me directly through the channels of thought and laid the intention of these plotters before me. But she was silent as to their personality while she made their purpose clear. She also furnished no particulars concerning herself, save that she was a woman, knew all about the business in hand and felt a keen desire to save me from a future which she regarded as likely to be of an unpleasant nature. She could not, of course, know that nothing is either pleasant or unpleasant from my standpoint; but there is no question that she meant well and declared her goodwill in this manner.

"After midnight, on Friday next, it is proposed to raid my dwelling and remove me from Applewood to a destination she did not know. She suspected, however, that I should be shipped in secret to some South American republic, where the abductors would endeavour to make considerable money by employing me as an exhibition, or source of entertainment. They argue, rightly no doubt, that I am not a 'national', since no recognized nation has any legal claims in connection with me, and that, once safely out of England, the law would have no power to demand my return. Hermes alone could order my repatriation. One sees the force of this reasoning. I was in doubt to mention the matter and considered whether it might be well to let humanity do as it willed with me; but I felt that you should be informed and, if such an event would

cause you inconvenience, then you may prefer to prevent it."

Sir Felix stared.

"You never cease to astound me," he answered, while Saurus felt no occasion for surprise.

"Indifferent as I am to my circumstances during my balance of life," he wrote, "the programme planned hardly signifies, save when I think of you, Professor. For a human being you have always struck me as unusually honest—doubtless thanks to your scientific training. I can trust you therefore to say whether you would wish to intervene, or prefer that I should be abducted and taken to South America or elsewhere. But consider the problem from your own point of view alone. It is all one to me and I shall quite understand if you think this idea a good one."

"You are a cold-blooded little fellow, and such indifference to your fate is utterly inhuman," replied Sir Felix.

"However, I am glad that you had the grace to think of my feelings. A more scandalous piece of rascality was never planned and I shall have the greatest satisfaction in laying these scoundrels by the heels."

"You will be interfering with elaborate hopes for their future happiness," argued Saurus. "For me the interesting thought is that female of your species who wishes me well and probably imagines that my future would be subject to discomfort and tribulation—conditions that mean nothing to me."

"As you have never been called to endure them, you are not in a position to say whether they would mean nothing, but probably find that they meant a great deal," responded the professor. "You must be reasonable and use your common sense, my dear Saurus. You have led what we should call a sheltered life, and suddenly to find yourself in the hands of a gang of blackguards only concerned to make money out of you might be a rude awakening."

"My time is short," the iguana replied, "and I should regret to spend it in a manner unbecoming. It is enough to know that you would prefer to oppose these people. Legally I belong to nobody and cannot therefore be stolen; but you would have the right to resist their entry upon your premises, because that is house-breaking—an indictable offence. No doubt you will consider might to be right in a case of this kind and conquer these persons by force of arms."

"Rest assured that I shall," replied Sir Felix, "and I should imagine you may live to thank me, for if you cannot condone our vices, you at least admit the occasional occurrence of our virtues. Gratitude is a rare virtue, doubtless, but there is no reason in the nature of things why a conscious iguana should not practise it."

"I see your point," admitted Saurus, "yet to feel gratitude is a purely human attribute—entirely desirable in you—though meaningless to me. I will, however, consider the possibility of attempting your virtues. The difficulty seems to be that, once capable of any kind of goodness, I should also have acquired the art of wickedness, which takes such terrible forms that it may be wiser to preserve my natural and neutral attitude."

"Go on with your bananas," replied the professor, "and leave this matter to me. I find no temptation to a neutral attitude before these shameful facts. Cunning and resolute ruffians have planned them, no doubt, but Scotland Yard will quite fail to see why their courage and ingenuity should be rewarded. Your indifference to law and order is difficult to understand."

Saurus considered this.

"One hardly knows enough about either to be critical," he pointed out. "Your police have their own theories of conduct, however, and will bring these unknown persons to the judgment seat in fullness of time."

"Every one of them is going to be locked up within half an hour of their promised raid," declared the professor. "And don't mention this to my sister, or anybody. Secrecy must be preserved and their defeat fall upon these plotters like a thunderbolt."

He then left his guest and once more communicated with the authorities. A commissioner, remembering the previous display of the iguana's powers, paid a visit to Applewood and heard the story again. He laid his plans accordingly and, soon after midnight on the following Friday, an ambush of armed constables under highly efficient leadership captured six men. Their arrival in a powerful motor car was duly signalled to the watchers, and while they stole silent-footed upon the dwelling of Saurus, night suddenly became as day under a blaze of electric light, police emerged from every bush, Sir Felix among them, and the marauders were handcuffed two by two.

From his bedroom window the iguana peered out upon them, judged that they were Asiatics and pondered over their purpose.

"They may," he thought, "have harboured a design to take me to the East, whence the old, crystal fountains of human wisdom sprang. Perhaps, after all, I have done ill in confounding their hopes, for in secret amid the fastnesses of India or China, or hidden amid the fruit-bearing groves of islands unknown, there still may linger deathless wisdom that, if discovered and proclaimed, might better the lot of man."

He watched the culprits being hustled away, and when they were gone, Sir Felix knocked and entered in triumph.

"The rascals appear to be highly educated Eastern thugs," he explained. "They state that their purpose was to convey you to their own country, where you would have been appreciated and your worth recognized. They assert that you would have been far happier, more contented and better understood among them; and they have an insane idea that, once in thoroughly congenial surroundings, you would have put off your lizard shape and presently set up business as a reformer."

"What will happen to these romantic and ill-advised persons?" inquired Saurus.

"Our police have not the slightest idea," replied the professor. "It is a case for the law, but complicated because without precedent."

"I should be disposed to dismiss them—perhaps with a caution," suggested Saurus. "They meant well, and though meaning well is a performance often attended with evil results among you, in this case motive should be recognized."

"Their real intentions have yet to be discovered," declared Sir Felix. "This nonsense is, of course, a blind. The police can be trusted to ferret them out and learn all there is to know about them. We have far too many undesirable aliens in this country. Now, good night. You can sleep in peace and safety."

Saurus scribbled a final word.

"Allay the uneasiness of 'Rex' before you retire," he directed. "He is making frantic signals from his chain and assuring me I am in peril. Pray tell him that all is well and the danger past."

CHAPTER XVII

Mrs. Midgeley-Masters, Brigadier Rook and Colonel Pegram all called at Applewood to congratulate Toddleben upon his honours and declare their satisfaction that Saurus was spared to him. The brigadier and the lady had met the stranger from another sphere, but only once. Both found themselves very uncomfortable in his company and thankful to leave it again. He caused them embarrassment and Mrs. Midgeley-Masters told Norah that she wanted to cry at the spectacle of the iguana, while Brigadier Rook declared that it was only by an effort he could abstain from laughing. But Colonel Pegram liked Saurus and enjoyed his opinions, for he was more intelligent than the brigadier and enjoyed some breadth of mind. About this season he paid a visit and desired the great lizard's opinion upon certain matters that were precious to him.

"What," he asked, "do you say to the following problem? I find my fellow creatures quite unable to offer me any prophecy of a comforting nature and our vicar himself shares my obscurity. It is the fate of my faith amid our warring ideals. The peril is really considerable, for not a few eminent divines applaud the forces opposed to their own religion, and desire to see them conquer. They must know that Communism would sweep Christianity away to-morrow, yet stoutly support it. The Nazis persecute the faith also and show an inclination to revive Thor and Odin—bloodthirsty deities from a far past. They propose to swallow Middle Europe, dominate Italy and so threaten the British Empire and make the world their footstool. That was their ambition in nineteen-fourteen, and if at first he doesn't succeed, the German has a rare talent for trying again. The Fascists are nominally on the side of Christianity, but are quite aware that the meek never inherited the earth, and never will. They have the Pope in their pockets for the moment, but education is proceeding by leaps and bounds in Italy and the Vatican subjected to an increasing draught. Only among our free democracies shall you find faith still respected and fairly prosperous; but should the dictatorial nations triumph, I ask you what will become of it?"

"If, as your household of faith believes, you human beings have souls to save," wrote Saurus, "then the salvation of your transient ideologies must ever be a less vital matter. To make the State your god is to worship an idol, for the State is a man-made creation arising naturally out of tribal communion; but the soul, if such there be, is a god-made miracle and above all national or patriotic standards—the supreme and eternal reality. If selfishness is justified in any connection whatsoever, it may be under the necessity to save your souls. Your Western recipe for this demand is to trust your faith; and other supernatural religions there are that share your convictions, recognize the need and approach it by another road. For the moment the question of your eternal souls would appear much in abeyance, because, under the stress of the times, more immediate and temporal problems thrust it into the background. Your bodies are in danger and your earthly homes. There will be no more battles waged for faith. Men will never die again to save their souls, but their kindred and their countries. Religion has ceased to glorify mass murder now, and should it regain any hold upon your hearts or recover earthly power, it will come as a new faith—a new, universal evangel that all can recognize and all must accept."

"A new evangel is impossible," explained Colonel Pegram, "because that would mean the destruction of the old. We Englishmen have the last and final flower and fruit of religion in our Protestant faith and English Bible."

"It is a case for pooling," replied Saurus. "Again and again I have discovered and declared that if mankind would only pool their scattered wisdom, then a sound basis for appeasement might appear. No faith that has won the devotion of myriads ever lacked of light for humanity. Each held a place in the evolution of your righteousness; but you have used them as an arena for opposed hatreds and so fouled them all. However, I shall soon write my last word upon that subject before I cease to be, and if you ask Sir Felix to show it to you when I am gone, I doubt not that he will do so."

"My dear fellow, don't talk of going," begged the colonel. "We should all miss you abominably and I never saw you looking better. Not quite so red in the gills as you used to be, perhaps; but if your appetite is good and you sleep well, there cannot be much wrong with you yet. Your idea, then—to return to the subject—is that if we pooled our scanty virtues, a way might yet be found by which humanity could walk in the paths of peace; and then those who believe in their souls and a happy hereafter, like myself, might find leisure for the subject and feel more hopeful of their ultimate success?"

"That is my impression," agreed Saurus.

"No tyranny, no persecution, no prejudice, no class hatred or national hatred, no patriotism—all jog along in a community of friendship and goodwill? But such a world is one that we should come into as strangers," declared the

colonel. "My good Saurus, you are asking for the rule of reason, and every reasonable man will tell you that is the last thing we shall ever attempt. Nobody in his senses would trust reason while we have a shred of faith left to cling to."

"There are some among you who would trust reason," wrote the iguana.

"I know: a handful of cranks. They don't count against the hope of the majority. Reason is a slut, a drab, a most unprepossessing and unpromising siren, I assure you. A Thames barge, plodding her snail-like way among the stately liners of faith. You mustn't suppose for one instant that the worship of reason would bring happiness—quite the contrary. It would, in fact, knock all the colour and spice out of our melancholy existence. Pure reason would simply sink us and rob us of the little fun we have got left. You may be quite sure that our unconquerable aversion from behaving reasonably was put into us by our Creator for a very good reason. We may not know it, but there it is."

Saurus had nothing to say in reply to these sentiments, so he turned to his dish of fruit and regarded the visitor solemnly while he peeled a pear.

The colonel took his leave after enjoying a bunch of muscat grapes.

"So long for the present, old boy," he said, "and give reason a miss till we meet again."

Whereon the iguana rose, bowed him out, then sat down again and peeled another pear. He knew that he was not destined to live much longer, but finding that any allusion to his end caused a listener to protest, decided not to say any more about it.

"The colonel may be right after all," he reflected. "It would seem that salvation cannot come to man from his thick head, but only, if ever, through his broken heart."

When Mildred Hapgood arrived to spend a few days with her mother, she too congratulated Saurus upon his escape.

"You saved a woman when you got me out of my mess," she said, "and I am rather glad it was a woman who saved you. One would not have thought that those wily Chinese could have let out their secret in the ears of a woman, but evidently one of them did."

"Is it not more probable that she secretly listened and overheard them?" inquired the iguana. "Be that as it may, she frustrated their plans, and since you are all so pleased with the result, that is as it should be."

Milly made a fruitless suggestion presently and wished that it lay within human power to restore Saurus to his native land.

"I imagined us packing you safely in a huge projectile with plenty of oxygen to keep you going on your journey," she told him, "and then starting you off and picturing you arriving, safe and well, among your own people. What a joy for your old age! Then you would learn your own language and tell them all about us and how wonderful we are; and you would meet your mother and father very likely, if they are still alive, and take them some beautiful diamonds and pearls and emeralds, and be the most famous person on Hermes and the first desirable alien to become historic in two worlds."

The other made no comment and Milly ran on.

"The next thing would be that we should start an inter-planetary system of communication and come and go. Men would arrive upon Hermes, very likely settle there and help to advance your prosperity, cheer you up and teach you to be bright as well as clever; and you would teach us to be clever as well as bright. One can see how it would work to our common advantage. If you only knew enough to tell us how to get you home again, all this might happen."

"It is very difficult for my brain to imagine such things," he replied. "Imagination is a quality denied me and, knowing an event to be impossible, my intellect declines to examine what the situation might be if it were not impossible. But your nimble intelligence is capable of picturing the scene, and your gift of human hope finds a bright side to it after the human fashion. To me, who see neither brightness nor gloom in all that may be brought to my consciousness, this endowment of the human mind is most interesting. I will, therefore, make an effort to estimate the value of intercommunion between Earth and Hermes if such were within the domain of reality."

Saurus set down his pen and considered; then he wrote with incredible speed.

"To reach the truth of such a matter is, of course, out of the question, because we only know one side," he told her. "It is barely possible to see the reaction of your species to such an event, but quite beyond even your imagination to know how mine would be likely to take it. One can only guess. If such things fell out and I returned to my country intact, learned my own language, as you say, and told traveller's tales, the first question that we must ask ourselves is what manner of tales should I tell. Believe me they would not be of a nature to promote inter-planetary communion. You suggest that I should take to my mother certain uncommon stones and the excretion of shell fish that you hold to be precious. You would approach a matron of Hermes as you would approach human savages—with a necklace of beads. But I venture to think that such a demonstration of goodwill would only support my traveller's tales concerning other far more significant matters."

Milly put down the paper.

"Women are women all the world over," she replied, "and I am perfectly positive that your mother would love pearls and emeralds and feel them to be glorious signs of our complete civilization."

Then she returned to her reading.

"My task would be complicated from the first, because it is impossible that our language, rich though it may be, possesses words for so many things of which we have no knowledge. And I should be similarly baffled by words signifying states, conditions and lizard wisdom of which I possess no knowledge either. But in course of time it might be possible to impress upon my fellow creatures the nature of existence on Earth, the complicated conditions created by good and evil, the incidence of war and its accompaniments, the struggle for power, the insecurity and contempt of life, the opposition of opinions, the universal waste of time, the abuse of your gift of speech, the eternal pandemonium created by the existence of noise, the necessity for clothes, the propensity to eat your fellow mammals, the contempt for ancient learning, the antipathy of nation to nation, the heroism, the knavery, the sanctity, the sacrilege, the hate, the love, the hope, the despair, and a thousand other results of your heredity and natural endowments—were I able to find words wherein to indicate a vision of mankind, then there can be no doubt of the result."

"If you made it picturesque," began Milly; but he shook his head.

"You are dealing with beings who lack any sense of the picturesque," he wrote. "Iguana Sapiens lives a far shorter time than you do, and though probably unconscious of the fact that his life is brief, probably finds his days quite long enough to justify them. I am convinced that he makes his little existence worth while and so earns the right to a tiny foothold in the cosmic scheme. My story could only convince him of the hideous dangers that must lie in any further approach to Earth. He would see himself overrun, conquered and possibly exterminated by a long-lived, ferocious and utterly unsocial being, possessed of infernal knowledge and abominable instincts—a creature so completely outside the pale of justice, reason and law that he has ignored his own invention of the oath, defied his own gods, murdered his own kind by the thousand million and prostituted much of the scientific knowledge that he has yet attained.

"In the light of such an appalling revelation," concluded Saurus, "the second bolt that might haply reach Hermes from Earth would not be opened, but subjected to instant destruction, and did my people again seek for neighbours and improved acquaintance with their fellow planets, it would not be yours to which they despatched another iguana's egg."

Miss Hapgood pouted and was inclined to be annoyed.

"You are prejudiced," she declared. "I can't think why you take such a black view of us. We have a saying, that you ought to judge a person by himself, and I'm sure you have met a great number of nice people, though you were quite right about that brute, Boluski. But take my uncle and my mother—could anybody have been kinder, or more thoughtful, or more patient than you found them?"

"I included sanctity among your attributes," he answered, "and the professor and Mrs. Hapgood are a most benignant man and woman if I am able to judge. But you very well know that I am not prejudiced, for the reason that I lack any power to be."

He proceeded in his impassive way to explain in what prejudice must consist, but Milly read no more.

"Well, well," she said, "I must buzz off now. Don't worry. I'm sorry my idea was such a wash-out and I hope, if Hermes sends an iguana to some other planet, he will have a better time than you seem to have had here. Good-bye for the

present. Mother has a lovely basket of Cape gooseberries for you, and some loquats and grenadines, so you must struggle along and hope for the best. That's our slogan at the War Office: 'Hope for the best and prepare for the worst.' Better to hope and fear, like us, than never do either, like you."

CHAPTER XVIII

Two extraordinary things happened at this season involving Mrs. Hapgood, Sir Felix and Saurus. Brother and sister both clashed with the iguana on totally different issues, and for the first and last time in his career, their visitor differed from each of them and displayed a strong preference between opposite courses of action.

"He might have been human," said Mrs. Hapgood, when relating her experience.

"I asked him to do something in my usual friendly way, and instead of instantly complying, as one expected, he demurred, gazed at me a moment out of his extraordinary eyes, then took up his pen and said that he would not oblige me!"

"What on earth did you want from him?" asked the professor. "And what could you have wanted that he felt a shadow of reason to refuse?"

"Only the loan of his little diary," she answered. "You may remember that I gave him a diary and explained its use as soon as he could write. He indicated satisfaction when I did so, and he has gone out of his way to tell me that he keeps it most carefully and writes each day's doings from his point of view. He notes down what fruits he has eaten, who visited him, and what new books he has read and so on. One never felt there was anything private about it, poor dear fellow, yet when I asked him to lend it to me, that I might verify some dates and see when certain eminent people visited us, he reflected a moment and refused to oblige me."

Sir Felix, whose personal defeat had yet to come, felt no doubt of the reason for this rebuff.

"It is in a sense human, as you say," he explained. "To be strictly in character, Saurus should have no sense or understanding of what we call 'privacy'. His diary might contain the sharpest strictures upon us, or the heartiest applause, but he is perfectly indifferent as to what human beings think of him and his opinions. Yet now it appears that some dim sense of propriety has made him feel there are things in his diary which would give you pain. Because he knows what mental agonies all human beings can suffer. This is to explain his refusal in a manner charitable to himself and credit him with some shadowy proper feeling, or possibly an emotion of doubt, or even fear, as to what might be your response to things set down in his diary. But if in truth there are impressions recorded concerning you or me of a subversive or derogatory kind, then Saurus ceases to be a subject for charity at all—quite the contrary, in fact. To traduce you would be an unthinkable action and proclaim him quite the basest iguana in the history of the species. Such an act could only mean that Nature had terribly erred in permitting self-consciousness to enter the lizard world. But, far more likely, he may have disparaged me and allowed himself some private freedom of criticism which he well knew would anger you. In any case, something all too human must have inspired the refusal."

"He may have declined from quite a high motive, and we must give him the benefit of the doubt," thought Norah.

"He may," replied the professor. "In any case, only a purely human instinct must be at the bottom of it, because it is not natural to him to fear anything. The psychology of Saurus is a matter entirely outside my province and I have thought sometimes that certain famous psychologists should be invited to inspect him; but, as against that, you know how I distrust the whole business and dislike the gentlemen who practise it."

"You don't believe in psycho-analysis at all," answered Norah. "We all know that. You say that it is as yet an infant science and takes far too much for granted. You laugh at its pretentious terminology and you point out that no two psycho-analysts ever arrive at the same results about anybody."

"There is in my opinion a good deal of quackery," admitted Sir Felix. "I will say no more; but when they claim that only psychologists are competent to give the verdict in criminal cases, then I hope that the law will continue to carry on its business without them, at any rate for the present. Saurus might, however, think differently. He has studied the subject, needless to say, and believes that there is a good deal more in it than I am prepared to grant."

"He is a bit of a psychologist himself," she replied. "Racial impulses and national traits of character interest him exceedingly. In fact, he told me that it is impossible to write history without these things. But the fact remains that he doesn't wish me to consult his little diary. He leaves it about as usual and would, no doubt, make no effort to oppose me if I insisted on reading it; but since he doesn't wish it, of course, he knows I won't."

"A time will come, in all probability," said Sir Felix, "when he must de cease; and then it is going to be my duty to write

a complete account of his life as far as I am able to do so. It may sound morbid and rather mean to anticipate his end even in thought, and nothing is farther from my wish that this abnormal personality should pass into the void; but one cannot hide the facts of existence, and my knowledge of his species tells me that he may not be with us much longer."

"Don't say that!" begged Norah. "I know how difficult he is sometimes and how, as a scientist, you hate mysteries and often find him a source of irritation; but I should be more than sorry if he were gone. You can't deny that he is the most interesting thing that ever happened to either of us—tiresome though he may be."

"I should be the last to deny it," he answered. "I speak now of his physical circumstances. They are altering and we must remember that he lives under a time schedule different from our own and also different from that of the terrestrial lacerta. He eats less; he tends in consequence to grow thinner. You can see his little ribs through his integument, and his old brilliant colours are growing dim. He is, in fact, passing through a healthy and normal old age at his usual headlong speed; but old age—healthy or otherwise—can only end in one way. He is not human, but he is mortal, and must finish his brief career—probably before the end of the year."

"How sad," murmured Mrs. Hapgood.

"For that reason," continued Sir Felix, "I propose inviting his co-operation at no distant date and asking him to oblige me in the matter of our forthcoming conversazione at the Zoological Gardens. The opportunity is an exceptional one and cannot, I fear, recur. The Society much desires that he should be present and is prepared to pay all expenses. I shall, of course, travel with him upon the Great Western Railway. A heated compartment will be reserved upon the train and a corner of the new reptile house in Regent's Park is to be specially arranged for his comfort. Needless to say that everything will be done and nothing neglected to ensure his health and safety."

"He will be the star piece of the conversazione," said Norah. "I'm glad, because I know what infinite care will be taken of him. But I think that I'll come too. Then he can always have one of us close to him."

"By this gracious act he will be able to repay our devotion," explained the professor. "Saurus has often regretted that he could not serve us—another human gesture, by the way—but now he will be in a position to oblige without subjecting himself to any inconvenience whatever."

Mrs. Hapgood was at once full of plans for the journey and a day later her brother broke his wishes to their guest.

"You are now in the fortunate position of being able to do me a considerable service, my friend, while at the same time enjoying a very interesting and illuminating experience yourself," he began. "I know your famous aversion from foreign travel and remember that you have declined opportunities to see the world, preferring the peace, seclusion and watchful consideration it was my privilege to offer you. I know that our literature and our exotic fruits and vegetables have sufficed your modest requirements and kept you in good fettle of mind and body; but now I want you to do a kind and highly desirable action—emerge from your hermitage for four-and-twenty hours, accept the invitation of the Royal Zoological Society and consent to attend their forthcoming conversazione as the guest of honour. The date is the fourteenth day of next November. We go up on the thirteenth, and every possible precaution will be taken, every arrangement made for your comfort and convenience from the moment you leave your apartments to the time you return to them. You will travel like a king. My sister and myself accompany you and you will have the satisfaction of feeling that you have given great pleasure to both of us and a demonstration of goodwill and friendship to our scientific leaders and the body of serious people who support them."

Sir Felix expected Saurus to pick up his writing-tablet instantly and record a favourable response; but, much to his surprise, the iguana made no swift reply. He looked at the professor, then shut his great eyes for a moment and indicated that he must reflect before he came to any decision. Then he opened them again and picked up his pencil very slowly. The fact that he should do this familiar deed in so tardy a fashion was itself of a startling nature, for as a rule he performed the feat of answering questions with extreme rapidity.

Now Saurus wrote, handed his answer to the other and marked the mournful result.

"I decline to go to the metropolis on the thirteenth day of next November," he said. "It lies in your power to take me if so you will, because it cannot lie in my power to oppose you, but not willingly should I go—for personal reasons that I must withhold from you."

Sir Felix stared, rose from his chair and prepared to depart. He grew a little hot, and his big shaggy eye-brows came down like a storm upon his eyes.

"An unmannerly and unreasonable refusal," he said sternly, "and I much wonder how you can deliberately wound me and offend the Society in such a trifling particular. You are indeed right to say that you do not share in any of our higher human emotions; but let me tell you that, despite your assertions to the contrary, you are not exempt from the fault of selfishness or the frailty of ingratitude. Here was your first opportunity to repay something of our devotion and, for senseless reasons you decline to give, you bluntly and brutally refuse it. You are a bad iguana, and I feel much tempted to wash my hands of you altogether and transfer you to the keeping of Science. Then you might perhaps begin to realize your good fortune and learn what you have lost by your own faulty conduct."

He waited for the delinquent to reply, but Saurus made no attempt to do so. He looked at Sir Felix with his customary, lustrous stare and the professor left him, strode away and banged the door.

Her brother related his reverse to Norah at a later time and she endeavoured to calm his outraged spirit. When the professor was pleased with his guest, he called him by his appointed name; but should he become annoyed, as now, he would allude to Saurus as 'the iguana', or even 'the lizard'. For the moment he could find no expression of contempt strong enough.

"I am sorely tempted," he said, "to take this reptile at his word and assert my authority. One would be quite justified in accepting our own relation to time and remembering that, after all, he is little more than a year old. When was it heard that any creature at such an age defied his lawful guardians?"

"I will go and chat with him," answered Mrs. Hapgood. "He may explain the situation to me; but if he has no good reason for such a curt refusal, I shall be quite as cross with him as you have evidently been. There is some hidden mystery here, I feel sure, for it is utterly unlike him to be so unpleasant. One would have expected him to oblige instantly."

But Norah could get nothing out of Saurus. After a long and eloquent appeal he merely wrote the words: "I do not wish to go," and left her to digest them as best she might.

The lady could hardly believe her eyes.

"This is the first time in your life that you have ever wished anything at all, or expressed any emotion save utter indifference about all that happens," she said, "and now, when you get a chance to repay some of the professor's ceaseless kindness and consideration, you deny him. Do try and see how this must look from his point of view, dear Saurus. You're not human, but you know now quite well what it is to be human and how easy it is to satisfy a reasonable, moderate man like Sir Felix. And not only my brother. The whole world of British science would feel it a compliment. If, therefore, against such a weight of opinion, you still decline to go to London for a few hours, with every provision made for your comfort, then we have at least the right to ask your reason. Perhaps, if I knew it, I might convince you that your objections can be removed; and if I found they were serious and demanded consideration, then I should be on your side at once. But it is wilful and quite unlike you to be so obstinate about nothing at all."

Saurus, however, continued quite unmoved.

"My reasons," he wrote, "are of a personal nature and I am not going to impart them to you, or anybody. In my opinion they are justified, and I will go so far as to say that did the professor insist upon taking me to his conversazione, he would be the first to regret it."

"Never blame any of us for being selfish again, then," she said. "You are a thankless little person, and your heart is as cold as your head. And if you were going to learn our ways and become humanized, then it's a great pity you didn't try to imitate my dear brother, who is always ready and willing to pleasure his fellow creatures when it lies in his power to do so."

"You invited my opinion," he answered, "and I have given it. I should strongly object to go; but the power is his, and he can exercise it if he will."

"Of course he won't," she answered. "You know that perfectly well. You're not a child, and if you don't want to go to a party you have the right to refuse, at your age. You're at least seventy-five of our years and must be treated accordingly. Only it's shocking and disappointing and a very bad advertisement for Hermes."

He turned to a dish of green figs and made no reply; while Norah added a word or two before she left him.

"You ought really to be punished," she declared, "and I very much wish I knew how to punish you."

She left him then, and later in the day submitted a course of action to her brother.

"It will be a reasonable thing to send him to Coventry for a time," she said. "He takes us so entirely for granted and expects us to wait upon him day and night and study his interminable notes and be his audience. He knows now perfectly well that we are both justly annoyed—in fact outraged—by his behaviour; but no doubt he thinks that we shall soon calm down and treat him as usual. Well, we won't. We'll give him a quiet little lesson and neither of us go near him again for a week at least. Peters can wait upon him entirely, and I venture to think that nothing will serve better to show him the nature of his lapse, when day after day passes and he doesn't see either of us. Everybody is so apt to take good things for granted and make such a fuss over bad things. And I'm sure that Saurus has taken you for granted far too easily and utterly failed to realize his immense privileges."

The professor agreed to this course.

"Goodness knows I don't want to see him," he replied. "One has to watch him closely in the interests of science and, of course, this development along familiar human lines must be recorded. It is another example of how much easier we find wrong than right. However, we can leave him to his conscience, if he's got one, for a few days. Peters knows all that he wants."

"I have spoken to Peters, who is, of course, very indignant," replied Norah. "He thinks that Saurus really doesn't deserve to see your face again for several weeks, and he suggested that we should keep him on a diet of nothing but his own tomatoes—the thing he brought with him—just to remind him of all he owes us."

"No," replied Sir Felix. "We must not be petty. When his story comes to be told—and no doubt I shall have to tell it—then it must not be recorded that any irresponsible or revengeful act ever marred his proper scientific treatment. Let his table be richly plied as usual; but for the present we will withhold ourselves from him."

"Be sure," prophesied Norah, "he is soon going to write a letter of apology. He is lightning-quick now to understand our moods, and when he realizes that he has gone too far and saddened us, he will communicate and beg us to forgive and forget. He quite understands the importance of forgiveness, and though he never forgets anything himself, he knows that we are apt to do so. He may even change his mind and consent to go, when he finds what a difference his conduct has made to our regard for him."

But Saurus did none of these things, and gave no sign that he was conscious-stricken or even perturbed. He noted briefly for Peters the nature of his requirements and directed him to remove a dish of medlars, which he could not eat; but he neither wrote to Sir Felix nor his sister, and advanced no inquiry concerning them.

"He's directed for me to get a thermometer, so as he can regulate the temperature a bit, and he'd be glad of some of them musk melons," explained Peters. "He sits by the fire all day, seemingly, and he don't write no more, but just reads and reads. He don't want no more newspapers; but his nose is always buried in a book. He sleeps a lot, seemingly, yet always wakes up when I come in the room. 'Rex' goes to see him and sit with him and cheer the varmint up."

When the butler was gone with the professor's thermometer, Norah showed strong inclinations to relent.

"It's getting horribly sad," she said, "and I'm not going on with it. We're being too human, darling, and he can't understand. It must mystify him dreadfully, because I feel sure now that he doesn't know in the least that he has done wrong. Perhaps he hasn't done wrong. You know how often we are bewildered to find people in a temper with us, when we are absolutely ignorant of any reason why they should be. And nobody can ever have lived a more puzzling life than he has."

Sir Felix also found himself in a condition to pardon.

"One of two things must happen," he said. "Either we yield, do not return to the subject and let him understand that his wishes will be respected, or I take the initiative and tell him that he accompanies me to London on the thirteenth of November."

"Too late," she reminded him. "You have let them know that Saurus declines to attend the conversazione and they are arranging other attractions. Though, of course, they'd welcome him, and he'd make far more sensation than anything else they could get."

In the event, however, neither the man nor the iguana went to town. But Sir Felix and his sister renewed relations with their guest and proceeded as usual in his company. He showed neither surprise nor gratification at their reappearance, but welcomed them in his polite fashion and listened to their talk. The past was not mentioned and they visited him together, spent an hour with him, commented on the weather and the first frost and trusted that he was warm and well. In his turn he inquired for their prosperity and hoped that it had not vexed them when he refused to eat medlars.

"They were rotten," he wrote, "and offended my sense of taste and smell."

The professor detected deterioration in Saurus when again alone with his sister.

"He's not all that he should be, in my opinion," he declared.

"Nobody can judge better than you when a lizard is off colour, of course," she answered. "Do you suggest some physic, or would you like Dr. Wilson to see him?"

"He is too thin—much too thin," declared Felix. "We have not seen him for a fortnight and he has fallen away considerably. His colours are fading fast. He looks shabby and his eyes lack the old lustre. His age, whatever it may really be, is weighing heavily upon him."

"What about a tonic?" asked Norah.

"There is no tonic but rest for old age," answered Sir Felix. "His mind is active still, I should say. The ordinary lizard simply passes from life to death in a calm and dignified fashion when his time is told, as most animals are used to do. The temperature of an iguana in his native land is eighty degrees Fahrenheit. I will ascertain his next time we meet."

"He must be kept very warm and have a hot-water bottle in his bed," said Mrs. Hapgood.

"If he became really unwell, I should judge it my duty to engage a night nurse," declared the professor; but a few days after the reconciliation with Saurus, he himself became indisposed. Going from the iguana's exceedingly heated sitting-room into a frosty air, Sir Felix caught a cold and found it necessary to keep his bed under threat of bronchitis.

"Now you're both done for and neither of you will go to the conversazione," sighed Norah.

CHAPTER XIX

Norah divided her time between the professor and their guest, conveying the progress of each to the other; but she found Sir Felix much more concerned for Saurus than the iguana on his account. Physical illness at no time interested the visitor, and he continued to concentrate on philosophy while evincing some preoccupation with politics—a new phase for him.

"It is natural," he wrote for Mrs. Hapgood on one occasion, "that the fate of Europe, and more especially this country, should occupy my thoughts, for though the English have done evil in past time, they may claim a balance of righteous dealing to their credit during the present century. You stand for the Law and have developed a steadfast instinct towards justice. Why, then, should willingness to bring radical differences to the arbitrament of Law be ruled out, and what is there in the Covenant of the League of Nations that renders it obnoxious to so many of you? The principle of the Law should be universal. No nation, great or small, weak or powerful, can justly claim to be above the domain of international Law. Then wherefore is arbitration scouted and war preferred? Such choice casts a grave shadow on the kingdom that ventures to declare it, for if arbitrament were agreed upon, then those competent to be the assessors could surely be discovered. Such men exist in every nation and might be trusted to lift vexed questions, that quicken the pulse and deaden the reason, into a higher domain beyond the reach of passion or threat of mass-murder—the only recognized solution for your major troubles."

"I don't know much about such knotty problems," answered Norah; "but I am afraid that when a strong nation is up against some vital question, she would always prefer to settle it her own way if she could and not let other people, however wise and impartial, do it for her. Take the question of the German colonies, for example. During her attempt to secure the domination of Europe she lost her colonial possessions, which were divided for future administration among the conquering powers. Now she wants them back. What she would have restored to the original owners had she won the Great War, it is not difficult to guess; but even supposing we were content to let their return, or otherwise, be decided by an independent tribunal, do you suppose that Germany would consent to abide by its ruling if decision went against her?"

"Why not?" inquired Saurus.

"I haven't the slightest idea," replied Norah, "but I feel perfectly certain she wouldn't."

"The bellicose possess very few friends, but great destructive power," returned Saurus. "Their attitude renders it necessary for the peaceful to take expensive precautions and devote precious wealth and industry to the degradation of armaments. It is strange that you suffer this universal distraction and impoverishment at one nation's frown. Did but the rest of earth make common cause for peace, unite and proclaim that war was the universal enemy, and that nobody could ever win another war, then neither the Teuton nor anybody else would longer be able to threaten earth. If it were but known that the combined might of the world was against aggression, the war-minded could only seek his salvation in peace, perceiving that further ostentatious preparations for war were idle."

"The Prussian instinct is to terrify everybody and keep the weaker nations in an atmosphere of omnipresent fear," said Norah. "It always has been so. Of course, if we could all pull together, as you suggest, we might convince them that their attitude is mistaken. Indeed, to be overbearing and truculent is always a mistake in the long run. It breeds nothing but hate. Neither Mussolini nor Hitler knows what Italy really thought about the rape of Austria, because both Italians and Austrians are frightened to tell them; but their rampant friendship is very shaky in reality. It can't go on for ever, and when thieves fall out, you know, the honest sometimes come into their own."

Saurus considered this statement.

"The virtues of dictators may live after them," he wrote, "but the quality of cruelty is not a virtue and can never be condoned. All men of goodwill invariably detest it and the cruelty of your present great dictatorial rulers is very marked. They aim not only at the body, but the soul. Above all else, they fear the spiritual in their people. That politics should trample over religion, after the German and Russian manner, is subversive of all freedom, for coercion in sacred matters should belong to your past alone. Cruelty in truth destroys the least respect for those who practise it, for only the coward is cruel."

"Their attitude to Jewry——" began Norah; but Saurus held up his hand and stopped her.

"You remind me of an incident," he wrote. "To a memory like mine human history is one long irony, and a trifle occurs to me that may entertain you. When Germany found herself hard pressed for explosives during your Great War, she turned to a chemist of genius who extracted nitrogen from the air of heaven and thus enabled her to pursue her purpose. But no Prussian mind accomplished this triumph. She had to thank a Jew for it."

No sooner did he begin to recover than Sir Felix declared his sickness a blessing in disguise.

"It is an ill wind that blows good to none," he told Norah. "My attack has made it impossible that I should go to the conversazione and, between ourselves, I am exceedingly thankful for it. Only duty would have taken me, as it should have taken Saurus. But I was prepared to do mine, and I shall never understand what mental aberration prevented him from following my example."

"He chose to discuss this delicate question himself a few days ago," answered his sister. "I didn't raise it, of course. I'd taken him the last of the late nectarines and he reminded me of the intense annoyance that he had created for both of us. He didn't say that he was sorry or anything like that. He evidently didn't feel in the least sorry, being unable to experience sorrow; but he wrote that he had not failed to observe our indignation and hoped that, at a future time, our intelligence would be equal to seeing how right he was to be firm and how wrong we were to be cross. Then he settled down to the fruit."

"There is a veiled insolence in remarks of that kind and I much resent them," replied Sir Felix. "He was always inclined to be patronizing and, in his old age, he will often permit himself to say quite insufferable things. It is a common fault of the *intelligenzia* of all countries where liberty of speech happens to be permitted. His action involved just those virtues which he is so fond of advocating for the salvation of mankind: altruism and the will to serve your neighbour, even at cost of personal inconvenience. But if these qualities are desirable for us, then they are quite equally desirable for the iguana family, however gifted they imagine themselves to be."

"He never patronizes—he couldn't," said Norah; "but perhaps some day we may find out what he was driving at."

Whereon her brother answered that what the fellow might mean, or not mean, was a matter of sublime indifference to him.

A few days later, however, Mrs. Hapgood's hope became verified and on the morning after the Zoological Gardens festa, they learned the little that remained to know. Sir Felix, who was now once more downstairs and had made a good breakfast, sat reading an ample account of the conversazione in *The Times*, when suddenly he became confronted by a new and strange Norah. She hastened into his study white and trembling. Her actions were wild and unpremeditated; her voice—as a rule so musical and well modulated—was quite out of control.

"He's gone!" she cried. "Saurus has gone, darling!"

The professor cast down his newspaper and leapt to his feet.

"Restrain yourself and be explicit," he begged. "Even if that is so, there is no need for you to become theatrical. Has he escaped?"

Mrs. Hapgood strove to be calm.

"Yes," she answered, "he has escaped. He's dead. The poor little fellow passed away in the night."

"Are you sure? You might very easily be mistaken," he told her; but she declared that no doubt existed.

"The moment I went in I was conscious of something unusual," she replied. "In a way the room had changed. You know he leaves his table somewhat untidy and everything awaits his hand when he awakes and gets up. But now all is in order—the books back on the bookshelf, the papers tidied and in their places, the cover on the typewriter. His sheaf of notes is made up into a pile. The room seemed empty of all the usual indications that it was inhabited by rather an untidy person. One felt as though he had gone away, even before one knew it."

"If he is no longer there, how can you affirm that he is dead?" asked the professor.

"He is there—in his chair drawn up by the fire. The book he had been reading lay open upon the floor—the only untidy thing in the room. It was that beautiful translation of the *Upanishads* by Mascaró, '*Himalayas of the Soul*'. Supposing him to be asleep, I approached and touched his shoulder, then wished him 'good morning' and picked up his book. But he took no notice and I bent down and looked into his face and knew that he was gone. He sat in his usual position with his hands folded in his lap; but his eyes told me, for their irradiant light was out and though open, they were glazed and sightless."

Sir Felix hastened down the covered way that communicated directly with Saurus. He doubted not that Norah's tale was true and felt no little moved when the dead iguana confronted him. His thoughts ran on. Much now devolved upon him and for a moment he felt almost helpless; but his mind operated quickly and he gleaned support from the spectacle of the tidy chamber. 'He knew that he was going to die,' reflected the professor. 'Hence this orderly dispensation of his affairs. It follows that he will have left some indication of his wishes to guide us.'

He guessed rightly for, at the top of voluminous notes, there appeared a sealed envelope directed to 'Sir Felix Toddleben, F.R.S.'. He picked it up, satisfied himself that any attempt to restore life must be in vain, then turned off the electric stove, picked up Saurus, who weighed but little now, put him upon his bed and drew an eider-down quilt over him. A deep-drawn howl from the garden told that 'Rex' was aware of his personal loss; but the professor left him to mourn, picked up his letter and returned to Norah.

"It is as you say. He has ceased to live, my love," he told her, then found to his amazement that his sister wept.

"Good powers! What are you crying about?" he asked.

"If I don't cry for him, nobody will," she said. "I had to cry. His death—all alone out there—is horribly sad and I *will* cry."

"We must be reasonable as he would wish us to be," replied her brother. "One should instinctively turn to his virtues at a moment like this, but he hadn't got any. He expressly denied the possibility of being good, and the consequent impossibility of being naughty. One must approach his memory from a different angle and the difficulty is to reach, or find a foothold for fair criticism. The poor creature defied exact scientific classification or moral valuation. Unconsciously, no doubt, I have acquired some of his own detached attitude to existence and am therefore prevented from feeling the smallest emotion at his decease."

"Don't you believe it," sobbed Norah. "You think you won't; but I know jolly well you will. You'll never look at a pineapple again without thinking of him and feeling miserable."

"Imagine no such nonsense," replied Sir Felix. "One is only moved to know what he died from and why he died at all. I shall insist upon a post-mortem, for science demands it."

"Read his letter then," directed Norah. "He won't have forgotten anything and you needn't worry, because if you don't respect his wishes in every particular, I shall leave you, darling. I don't care a button about science at a time like this; but I dare say he did. He always said that when science recognized the meaning of morality, it would conquer the earth."

"It is evident that he knew he was going," answered the professor, "and to his orderly mind the fact may have awakened some belated sense of duty to mankind and even obligation to us; but I can hardly believe it. However, we will learn."

He sat down and read the last words that Saurus had written.

"Misunderstandings, though a matter of daily occurrence between members of the human family, I have never become concerned with to my knowledge. But now, when about to cease existence, I devote a moment to your recent wrath directed against me. The situation was created in the following manner. It is evidently a property of *Iguana Sapiens* (as you name us) to be aware when his end is near, and I became conscious some weeks ago that I should die upon the fourteenth of November. This fact will explain, first, why I denied my diary to the inspection of Mrs. Hapgood, because I had already chronicled the date in it and guessed that she would read and feel regret; and, secondly, why I declined to go to London, believing that my sudden death in the middle of the *conversazione* might cause inconvenience. It must inevitably have happened in the midst of your festivities, for the time is now ten o'clock and I have but two hours to live.

"Concerning the disposal of my body I desire to present it to Science. The skeleton should be extracted and exhibited separately; the skin skilfully stuffed, arranged in a sitting position and coloured to represent me in the prime of life. Attention should be paid to the eyes and their brilliance simulated to the best of your power. It is not your custom to treat your own dead in this fashion; but since you display the corpses of defunct Egyptian monarchs and eminent Muscovite dictators to the public gaze, there can be no objection to treating my dust in like manner. If human heroes may become museum specimens, why not Saurus?"

"There remains to take my farewell of mankind. It were idle to make a final appeal to his cosmic sympathies, because he lacks them, and whether any such principle will enlarge his outlook upon the universe in future time, none can predict; but it is enough to hope that Charity will some day enjoy the sun of his favours and that love for man may develop and be discovered as the crown of reason. Charity must reign for ever above all other ideologies within the compass of your intelligence, for no human theory of action surpasses it, no covenant can embrace a higher righteousness. Indeed, I would go further and suspect that within the ambit of time and space, wheresoever conscious beings are gathered together, your Golden Rule might well prove their enduring palladium, sheet anchor and tower of strength.

"From the Rule for you earth-born mortals there springs the vital principle of trust and faith in man as man, and out of that root and branch is born a flower more noble still and a fruit beyond compare. For from doing to others as you would have them do unto you, there emerges the supreme concept of doing better to others than it may be in their power to do for you, of bearing one another's burdens, of creating a world wherein the strong out of their strength succour the weak, the compassionate hasten to those who have not known compassion. Then are the granaries open, to cast their manna upon many a hungry human wilderness; then are your sorrows shared and halved, and your joys shared and doubled. The need is everywhere, only the will neglected. Rest no more, therefore, until you shall have created that will and recognized it for the goal you seek; remember the rare spirits who have already found it and are doing single-handed what all might do together. Oh, you men and women, waken and welcome the will to love each other, and believe that only so can your eternal quest for happiness win any answer worthy of the name.

"You are but a tiny cluster upon the vines of heaven, where the grapes are worlds; yet you hold the power to ripen your bitter berries and add to the eternal vintage of cosmic sweetness if so you will."

"There!" wept Norah. "And if he'd only lived a year longer he would have been as nice as any of us. And he ought to have a proper little grave for me to look after. I hate to think of him in a glass case at South Kensington for every fool on earth to stare at."

"Science must come first," answered Sir Felix. "Where are the telegram forms?"

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

was born in India in 1862, and for the first ten years of his working life was an insurance clerk. His first artistic love was the stage, for which he studied, but he later abandoned acting for writing, from 1896 onward producing many novels, verses and plays.

His interest in the stage persisted, and in 1917 he wrote his famous comedy, *The Farmer's Wife*, which had such a great success in London.

Since then his career has been very active, each year seeing at least one new work from his versatile pen, and his output in each single branch of literature that he has essayed would satisfy most industrious authors.

But to him life has so many facets, and time so many changes, that for his portrayal of the human scene and human endeavour, his pen is constantly and abundantly stimulated.

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THE THIEF OF VIRTUE

"It's Dartmoor, be it understood,
Zo there's no call for me to go
And say *The Thief of Virture's* good,
For all his Dartmoor tales be zo.

"It's packed with girt good sense and wit
Like those he've written back along.
Jan Murray be a-zelling it,
An' I should zay it's going strong."

—*Punch*.

WIDECOMBE FAIR

A delightfully human comedy of village life and ways, of particularly charming and individual country people, written with all the skill and complete enjoyment usual from the master hand of Devonshire's greatest novelist.

[The end of *Saurus* by Eden Phillpotts]