

# THE LOST WORLD

Continued from page 5

business. There were one or two folk who were inclined to take him seriously; but he soon choked them off."

"How?"

"Well, by his insufferable rudeness and impossible behavior. There was poor old Wadley of the Zoölogical Institute. Wadley sent a message, 'The president of the Zoölogical Institute presents his compliments to Professor Challenger, and would take it as a personal favor if he would do them the honor to come to their next meeting.' The answer was unprintable."

"You don't say!"

"Well, a Bowdlerized version of it would run, 'Professor Challenger presents his compliments to the president of the Zoölogical Institute and would take it as a personal favor if he would go to the devil!'"

"Good Lord!"

"Yes, I expect that's what old Wadley said. I remember his wail at the meeting, which began, 'In fifty years' experience of scientific intercourse—' It quite broke the old man up."

"Anything more about Challenger?"

"Well, I'm a bacteriologist, you know. I live in a nine-hundred-diameter microscope. I can hardly claim to take serious notice of anything that I can see with my naked eye. I'm a frontiersman from the extreme edge of the Knowable, and I feel quite out of place when I leave my study and come into touch with all you great, rough, hulking creatures. I'm too detached to talk scandal, and yet at scientific conversations I have heard something of Challenger; for he is one of those men whom nobody can ignore. He's as clever as they make 'em, a full charged battery of force and vitality; but a quarrelsome, ill conditioned faddist, and unscrupulous at that. He had gone the length of faking some photograph over the South American business."

"You say he is a faddist. What is his particular fad?"

"He has a thousand. But the latest is something about Weissmann and evolution. He had a fearful row about it in Vienna, I believe."

"Can't you tell me the point?"

"Not at the moment; but a translation of the proceedings exists. We have it filed at the office. Would you care to come?"

"It's just what I want. I have to interview the fellow, and I need some lead up to him. It's really awfully good of you to give me a lift. I'll go with you now, if it is not too late."

HALF an hour later I was seated in the newspaper office with a huge tome in front of me, which had been opened at the Article "Weissmann versus Darwin," with the subheading, "Spirited Protest at Vienna. Lively Proceedings." My scientific education having been somewhat neglected, I was unable to follow the whole argument; but it was evident that the English professor had handled his subject in very aggressive fashion, and had thoroughly annoyed his Continental colleagues. "Protests," "Uproar," and "General appeal to the chairman" were three of the first brackets which caught my eye. Most of the matter might have been written in Chinese, for any definite meaning that it conveyed to my brain.

"I wish you could translate it into English for me," I said pathetically to my helpmate.

"Well, it is a translation."

"Then I'll try my luck with the original."

"It is certainly rather deep for a layman."

"If I could only get a single good meaty sentence which seemed to convey some sort of definite human idea, it would serve my turn. Ah, yes, this one will do. I seem in a vague way almost to understand it. I'll copy it out. This shall be my link with the terrible professor."

"Nothing else I can do?"

"Well, yes, I propose to write to him. If I could frame the letter here, and use your address, it would give atmosphere."

"We'll have the fellow round here, making a row, and breaking the furniture."

"No, no, you'll see the letter—nothing contentious, I assure you."

"Well, that's my chair and desk. You'll find paper there. I'd like to censor it before it goes."

It took some doing; but I flatter myself that it wasn't such a bad job when it was finished. I read it aloud to the critical bacteriologist with some pride in my handiwork:

DEAR PROFESSOR CHALLENGER.—As a humble student of Nature, I have always taken the most profound interest in your speculations as to the differences between Darwin and Weissmann. I have recently had occasion to refresh my memory by rereading—"You infernal liar!" murmured Tarp Henry)—by rereading your masterly address at Vienna. That



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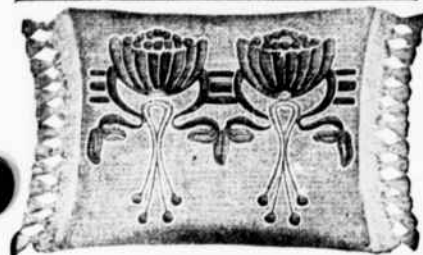
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