

of the literal truth of the Incarnation. We were debating in a handsome cinema on a Sunday afternoon, and the title of the picture for the week was printed in enormous letters over the facade. My opponent won the hearts of all of us by confessing that for a week or two his friends had warned him that he had taken on a most formidable antagonist, so we could imagine his feelings when he arrived at the cinema and saw over its door the gigantic warning: Ivan the Terrible.

It is doubtful if I shall ever visit Scotland again, as both the Secularist and the Rationalist Society for which I lectured are in decay and I may not live to see the world's recovery. So let me protest that the belief or representation that the Scots are mean is a wretched libel. I have in half a century given more than 100 lectures in the city of Glasgow, and nowhere have I found a warmer welcome and a more generous spirit.

## 9. CONTACTS WITH AMERICA

It is one of my early recollections that I occasionally stood in childish wonder on the landing stage at Liverpool and saw the emigrants with their poor bundles, their tin cups and pans rattling as they mounted the gangway, take the boat for some far-away and wonderful land that my elder sister called America. Forty years later I embarked on the Baltic at the same landing stage in different conditions, but I need say little about that first flying visit. A lecture-agent had secured a few engagements for me, and I had hardly time to make the acquaintance of New York before I had to return to England. I had not set the city afire.

My friend Major Putnam, who had already published a number of books for me, found me quarters in the City Club and introduced folk. Ingersoll's family—his widow, his two daughters and their husbands, and two grandchildren—still lived in the famous house, and I was warmly welcomed there. I picked up a fellow-student of monastic days, but he was now a six-inch gun in suburban politics and our old association had to be kept a deadly secret on account of Catholic voters. Another friend was an ex-priest, but he had inherited a comfortable fortune and married a socialite lady from whom also the link that bound us had to be concealed. I was entered at half a dozen clubs, lectured and spent the week end at a swell girls' college somewhere in Connecticut, spoke for Mangasarian's Rational Religious Society in Chicago, lunched with a group of financiers (one of whom had become friendly with me on the boat) in Wall Street . . . In short, I dizzily reeled from point to point, as the Briton does on his first visit, and returned to tell folk all about America.

The agent, a young and not influential man, had stipulated that I must hold myself free to respond to any further call he made so that I could not engage in any kind of national war service. All that I could do at that stage in the First World War was to give my name to a voluntary organization for helping the wounded, and I lectured in scores of hospitals. To one who remained in London through the Second World War it seems a pale recollection of dangers, but there were moments. One night I lectured to some hundreds of convalescent soldiers on the east coast, only about 30 miles from France. I gave my lantern lecture on the evolution of life and my soldier audience, dimly seen in the reflected light from the screen, watched critically how I behaved under my baptism of fire; for a Jerry circled round and round over our heads for a quarter of an hour, evidently trying to pick out the hospital and dropping a bomb occasionally. I packed more nervous jokes into that quarter of an hour than I had ever done before in a scientific lecture. It was during one of these hospital lectures that I first saw "moving

pictures"—the first was Chaplin in his custard pie days—which have since provided the most pleasant relaxation of my strenuous life.

In December, 1916, I heard the call to America, but I almost missed entirely one of the longest trips I ever made there. A lean, dyspeptic major was in charge of the soldiers who searched our baggage at Liverpool. Was I taking any letters out of the country? None whatever, I said; and the major's eyes flashed fire when a man threw open my trunk and showed a bunch of letters. My wife had thoughtlessly put them in for friends in New York. I had barely persuaded the officers of this when he picked out from amongst my lantern slides a pretty colored view of Sydney Harbor, and his eyes bored into me. I was taking, possibly to Germans in America, a view of the fortifications in Sydney Harbor (of which I had never heard)! It gave me my first misgiving that military folk do strain at gnats and swallow camels. On the scale of my picture of the entire bay the island was no larger than and just as featureless as a pin's head. But I was put under guard, and I stood against the wall—a horrible omen—an armed six-foot sergeant beside me, while I saw the final preparations for the sailing of the ship without me. But my sergeant—bless his large heart—was watching the major, and he presently whispered to me from the corner of his mouth, "Try the old bugger again," and it came off. They confiscated my three-inch view of the 100 square miles of Sydney Harbor, and doubtless it is in the museum of the military intelligence folk amongst their collection of spy-trophies.

To dismiss this point, I may say that on the same boat was a highly paid emissary of the government, a well-known dramatist. He did not during the voyage say a single word to the hundred critical Americans who were aboard, and the American press smiled at him and his pretty daughter and ample wardrobe. The large sum spent on the publicity he was to do was thrown away while I, totally unrecognized by the authorities and not paid a single cent, spoke for the cooperation of America in the war so often . . . Need I say more than that the Harvard Club made me an honorary member for my services and Theodore Roosevelt gave me a lunch of honor there? Yet when, six months later, I returned to Liverpool, the military once more put me under guard and sent me for a long "special examination." Their ears tingled before I quit them.

I found the agent had few lectures for me and I meditated a speedy return to England and war work when the Germans declared their "barred zone," miles out over the Atlantic, and my wife cabled me, imploring me not to venture home. Presently came a letter telling me that my youngest son was gravely ill in a hospital, and I cabled that I was sailing; which brought a reply assuring me that he was out of danger and I must not come. So for six months I became a citizen of New York, and I began to know and love America. Hotels, even at \$2 a night, were draining my pocket, and my friend Mrs. Palmer Cape, pupil and friend of Lester F. Ward, took me in hand. She found me a fine apartment, at \$9 a week for bed and morning coffee, in one of those handsome brownstone houses between Broadway and the Park—I fancy it was 75th or 76th Street—and I soaked in the American atmosphere. Many a time later folk told me that if I wanted to know the real America I must "go west." In later trips I visited most of the States, but only one city, San Francisco, has ever rivaled New York in my regard. I trod its streets for hours, day and night, from the Battery to Harlem. I ate in every type of eating place and mixed with folk of every class and color.

The few lectures the agent had arranged were soon given, but I had a host of generous friends and they found me work enough to pay my way and feed the birds in the nest across the sea. I had never forgotten my pleasant week-end in the girls' college, where I had been permitted to take my meals with the young ladies and study that interesting American type. The principal, an impressive and genial lady, had urged me to let her know whenever I was in America, and she now invited me to

come again to lecture. But the atmosphere was less warm. A lady-teacher whispered to me that in the meantime I had published my "Tyranny of Shams," in which I profess not only my religious and political heresies but my liberal views on ethics. By some freak it had reached the lady-principal. She redeemed her promise and was courteous, but no more merry lunches and dinners with those daughters of wealthy folk whom she guarded.

Several times I met this American type; just as the prophets, generous, and in most respects fine, but narrow as the gates of heaven on ethical questions. I dined one night at Putnam's, yet at a word of mine in praise of Wells he jumped up from his chair. His grandfather had probably been as narrowly loyal to King George, his father to Jehovah and now G. H. was as stubborn and fierce as ever in the one loyalty that was left him, the Puritan ideal. But when I went on to tell them how I was going to Pittsburgh to spend a day or two with a German-American, my esteemed friend George Seibel, the dramatic critic, G. H. actually left the room—his own dining room. Shortly before I had had a similar yet amusingly different experience with George Moore. One night when the French novelist Dujardin and I dined at Moore's house the talk slipped somehow to the subject of homosexuality. Moore was no Puritan but he loathed the very sound of the word sodomy, and he quietly, with exquisite courtesy, slipped out of the dining room for 10 minutes so that Dujardin and I should be free. I had not known Moore's phobia, though the Frenchman, who smiled and explained it to me, did. But there was not the thinnest shade of annoyance on Moore's face when he returned. Putnam was pale with anger. To him all Huns were Huns.

I have never kept a diary and have not even a list of lecturing engagements on these tours abroad, but I recall these few memories so that American readers I have won in the last 20 years may understand how I came to know America. My mornings were spent writing, after the merry coal-black maid had brought up my coffee and rolls in my large and pleasant bed-sitting room. From Dodd Mead, when the first Russian Revolution took place, I got a commission to write my "Romance of the Romanoffs" (and an advance fee of \$400), the reading for which I did at the library at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. About 1 o'clock I found the Childs or an Automat on Broadway, and an infinite variety filled the rest of my days. The warm Ingersoll home was open to me at all hours and for all meals, and Mrs. Cape and her family, Mrs. Marian Cox (wife of the treasurer of the Democratic Party), and others whose names I blush to say that I have forgotten were as generous. Mrs. Ingersoll-Brown arranged a course of lectures for me in her drawing room, besides a meeting of a score of editors and important journalists to hear me speak on the war; at which one explained, raucously, that "We Americans cannot stand this British assumption of superiority" and the editor of the *New York Times*, who sat next me, whispered "Because it's true." One friend annexed another. There was a lady, wife of a high civic official, of the exquisite delicacy of porcelain, at whose house I often visited yet, though I fell madly in love with her, at a reverential distance, I cannot recall her name. They had me speak at suffrage meetings and in drawing rooms. Someone whispered to me once that the lady with whom I had just been speaking was of the cream of New York society, but I remembered best that the lady who had poured tea for me that afternoon, and who had been pleasantly exasperated by my rejecting cup after cup because it was too weak, was Mrs. Thomas Edison . . . At night, if someone did not take me to a theater or dinner or the Authors' Club, which happened several times a week, I wandered about Chinatown or the East Side or the Bronx.

Both professors of history at Columbia, Robinson and Shotwell, were warm friends of mine, and I spent hours lunching or discussing in the Faculty Room. I think it was on this trip that they induced the

head, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, to engage me to lecture in the Historical School on the evolution of science out of medieval thought; though Butler, under Catholic influence, soon turned against me. I gave also a dozen or so lectures to the public in the university buildings under what we call in Britain the University Extension scheme. One Alumni Day the speaker of the University of the City of New York failed, and they summoned me to speak on the contrast between the British and the American constitutional systems. I remember making the great audience gasp by saying, right at the beginning: "The first difference is that you have a President and we Britons a King, because we would not tolerate the power that the President possesses." The pleasantly turbulent and exciting life I was leading made me, I fear, seem a little conceited; but it was really the exhilaration of the New York spring and of all the honor and kindness shown me.

I approached nearer to the general body of the citizens in the forum which the city then financed. The chief official in charge had me a score of times open the debate with a lecture and we had some lively discussions in the schools at night. War work took me back to a world of the rich and the academic. I spoke mainly in drawing rooms and colleges, and, as I said, the Harvard Club made me an honorary member, though I never felt as much at home in it as in the others (City, Lotus, Union, Authors, etc.). Ex-President Theodore Roosevelt and a few friends of his held a lunch in my honor there. Wilson had not yet asked Congress for a declaration of war, and Roosevelt dredged his dictionary for terms in describing him. We were still at the oysters so I said, "Would Rock Island oyster be any good, colonel?" "Just the thing, my dear sir," he thundered, "just the name for him." The secretary of the club, a pleasantly malicious man, interrupted one of the colonel's tirades to tell him that I was a pacifist. To ease his blood pressure I at once explained that I am a pacifist in the sense that I hate war but in the meantime "if any man smites me on one cheek I smite him promptly on both." He had not heard the little joke before and he shook with laughter; and a week later, one of his sons told me that he was going round New York telling folk how he "met a pacifist after his own heart."

I was still in New York when Wilson asked for war—and I never saw a metropolitan city receive so momentous a decision so quietly—and the Harvard Club invited me to speak at the celebration meeting and banquet of combined Harvard and Yale graduates. It was a roaring night. The dinner was long delayed, and I trust the recording angel has not kept count of all the cocktails that were forced upon me. Then there was wine, and there was champagne in the loving cup, and, while Ian Hay told one-half of the crowd a few of the technicalities of firing machine guns, I was hoisted on a yard-square table in another room and I gave fiery speech for an hour—"just the thing we wanted" a heavily gold-braided gentleman told me—to a crowded audience. Many seemed to be hanging from the ceiling by their eyelashes, the room was so packed and enthusiastic. Then they poured a huge brandy and soda into me, and General Leonard Wood, another general (Hodges, I think), and I retired to drink beer and smoke our pipes, British fashion, until the small hours.

I had a different experience before the declaration, when I accepted an invitation to speak on the war at the small New York Socialist center. They were all bloodthirsty pacifists, but the worst behaved man in the room—and the best dressed—was one Leon Trotsky, whose name was then unknown to me. He did not know any more than I that the first day of the Russian Revolution was closing while we were talking and he was assuring us that under no circumstances whatever was it lawful to shed a brother's blood. He left next day for Canada, where the British authorities held him up on one pretext or other, for Russia, and it was not long before he became War Minister and athirst for slaughter. I fear Trotsky left rankling in my memory an impression of his personality that I could never obliterate.



The standard of manners in most of the small groups of advanced folk—Socialists or Freethinkers—I met in my travels contrasted strongly with the pleasant courtesy and consideration—naturally mere formal ceremonies never impressed me—of more conservative circles. I was once invited to sup and speak at a labor club, though hardly a workingman's club, in Melbourne, where unconventionality was so cultivated that my friends warned me in advance not to resent it if, while I was speaking, some member of the large group interrupted me to tell me that I was a damned fool or a bloody liar. It might be suggested that the wealthy or college folk amongst whom I was so much at home had no idea of my deep and dark heresies, but most of them had. My good friend Mrs. Marion Cox had two pages, with a large portrait, of me in a Sunday Supplement of the *New York Times* one week. It was titled "McCabe the Sham-Smasher" and told of all the heresies confessed in my "Tyranny of Shams." I imagine that much of this deliberate—I would almost call it boorishness—is a natural reaction from the more superficial polish and luxurious smoothness of bourgeois or wealthy life. Typical of much of it is the story of the man who began to correct his wife politely just as they were leaving a friend's house. "Darling," he said, "why did you play that ace of diamonds?" and, as the door closed, he hissed, "You bloody fool."

What has tried me more is the harsh intolerance of so many advanced folk. A few nights before bearding the Socialists in their den I had spent an evening, dining and opening a debate, amongst the artists. As I said, my exhilarating experience in that six months made me overbold at times, and I had given as my thesis: "America never had an art and never will." It clearly irritated as well as amused, but we had a courteous and interesting debate. No one even reminded me of the elementary fact that I knew nothing about art. The editor of one of the monthlies, the *Century*, I seem to remember, asked me to write an article for him on "The Soul of America." I had before leaving London written "The Soul of Europe" under pressure from my friend Fisher Unwin, and Professor Monroe, of the Columbia Education School—for whose encyclopedia I wrote a few articles—had greatly praised it in New York. This editor flattered and spoiled me, like all the others, by his assumption that I had seen so much of American life that I was an authority on its "soul" and by insisting with epigrammatic excess, when I urged him to entrust the job to an American, that "all Englishmen can write English, and no American can." But he inserted my article without a murmur when he found it headed, "In Search of the Soul of America."

I went on to Pittsburgh, gave a couple of lectures, and spent a few happy days in the home of George Seibel, who still edited the local German paper. His gentle wife seemed nervous whenever she had to leave us together—I suspect she had an ambulance waiting—but we knew and respected each other. Both during that and the second World War I strongly resented the idea that I must hate and distrust all Germans because *some* Germans had engineered a war and many of them were intoxicated by their war-talk. As a matter of fact we never discussed the war except that before I left he brought out such works of mine as he had and insisted that I write in them such dedications as "From the British Pirate to the Bloody Hun" or "In Memory of Three Days in a German Dug-out."

Chicago was next, and the British spies had more misdeeds to report. Unaccustomed as yet to travel in America I took a day-coach train and reached Chicago, unexpected, about midnight. The American hotels, I was told, were full and a genial and amused taximan took me to the Bismarck, in which now none but Germans would stay. They equalled me in courtesy.

But on that visit I remained only a few days in the city. I was chiefly

interested in the radical movement. There were then three crowded meetings weekly. Percy Ward, whom I had known as a Secularist lecturer of great promise in England, had a University Rationalist Society, Arthur Morrow Lewis had a huge audience of a Socialist-Freethought character, and Horace Bridges had brought together the remnants of Mangasarian's Rational Religion Society in an Ethical Culture Society. I spent most of the time with Ward and Lewis; though Ward privately told me that he on his first day in Chicago recognized that Lewis, who was useful to him, was a man whom the British police would like to meet, and what my relations with Ward himself became will appear later. Of Bridges, whom I had known as a printing employe of the Rationalist Association in London, I was rather shy, as he had recently issued a work in which he declared that he had found God in the magnificent soul (in the war-efforts) of America. But to that also I may return.

My only further dip into the Middle West, where I had been told to expect the real Americans, was in response to an invitation to speak in Omaha. A Rationalist owned a hospital and wanted talks to his staff and friends; and I found them as fine and generous a type of American manhood as I had been told to expect. But that first short trip was pleasant and uneventful, and I returned to New York to find that the first American liner to venture across since the declaration of war had been armed and was ready to sail. I sailed in it, amongst a crowd of doctors and nurses. But I was already a war-seasoned veteran and, while they slept on deck through the barred zone, I retired nightly to my little cabin on the lowest and cheapest deck. I was never reckless, though by this time already a little stoical. I packed my most expensive lantern slides in the pockets of my overcoat, kept it by my pillow, and made myself familiar with the route to the boat in which I was allotted a seat.

I have already told how back in London I offered my services to the Foreign Office and became the chief neutral-press journalist in the new Ministry of Information. The work in our section seems to have been done immeasurably better and more economically than the work of the Ministry of Information in the recent war, but my admiration of national service sank low when I volunteered to lecture to the troops in Germany during the Armistice. Officers had nothing to do yet their organization of these lectures was painfully lazy and inefficient. I have already described my experience with the clergy at our mess in Cologne.

In 1922 I made the trip across stricken Europe to Athens and Crete, of which I will say a little in the next chapter, and in 1923 I spent a month in Spain studying what are called the Moorish remains as well as the life of the people. In 1923 I paid, as I described, my third and last visit to Australasia. At this point even my passport seems to have become dizzy with travel. The stamps and visas seem to jump from year to year and country to country, but the next (or next but one) visit to America, in 1925-26, was the prelude to the blackest year of my life and is burned deep in my memory. My disastrous experiences in Chicago must be postponed, as they are an integral part of my tragedy, and I seem to have left that city with so seared a memory that I can hardly trace my further movements. I remember making a flying trip to deliver a Sunday lecture in Winnipeg, where I had a magnificent reception, but I toured the whole of Canada in 1928, as I will tell later. I visited Detroit, startled Des Moines and even Keokuk with lantern lectures arranged by the Unitarians, gave two lectures at Denver (where I had the novel experience of seeing the gentleman who took me for a ride on the foot-bills of the Rockies bring a loaded rifle and revolver as a precaution against Catholics, and long talks with Judge Ben B. Lindsey), and for the first time I reached San Francisco and Los Angeles. One can no more compare San Francisco and New York than one can compare a delicate hock and champagne, but the lovely city and the warm friend-

ship—chiefly with Macdonald, head of the Labor College and a real friend—nearly healed the wound of Chicago. A friendly lawyer organized a number of lectures for me in Los Angeles, and there again I had fine audiences and warm friends. Clara Bow was the only star—and she was then at the beginning of her triumph—I met in Hollywood, but I visited a few studios with great interest.

I had almost to tear myself away from these friends in Hollywood, but I was tired, and I had promised myself that I would return to England, in my eagerness to see the ruins of another ancient civilization, by way of Mexico and Yucatan. A friend gave me introductions to the ex-president of Mexico and others but, except that I became friendly with an American journalist who helped me much on the long journey from Los Angeles to Mexico City, I sought no favors and just used my own eyes and ears. Besides staying a fortnight in the lovely Avenida del Progreso I decided to visit—not counting the nearly superb remains at Teotihuacan—Oaxaca, Mita, Uxmal, and Chichen-Itza. It was then difficult to reach the ruins in Southern Mexico; and when I proposed to visit a site in the west my American friends in Mexico City told me that, as there were no hotels, any peasant who put me up for the night would be deeply affronted if I did not sleep with his wife. I feared she might not be clean and did not go.

The character of the people pleasantly surprised me after what I had heard about them in America. I found them uniformly friendly, helpful, and in rural districts delightfully ingenuous. On the boat from Vera Cruz to Progreso I made the acquaintance of a young Chicago engineer and his charming wife. We both had introductions in Merida, and we pooled them and traveled together. The American lady, a most gracious and helpful lady, in Merida to whom a Los Angeles friend sent me, arranged our longer trips, and in sending us to Chichen-Itza she told us to choose whether we would stay the night in hammocks at a hotel at the railhead or sleep at the hostel near the ruins. We sent the lady in to see the hammocks, and I gathered that we should have many small and unpleasant bedfellows. But the young lady was only a little less embarrassed at the ruins. A buxom Mayan lady proudly showed us the brass beds in her hostel—both beds in one room! I found it difficult to explain to her why it was not desirable for me to share a room with the married couple, but she found me a low truckle-bed in an old barn with great holes in the wall, and at day-break her pigs and turkeys came in and nosed me. There was an American archaeological expedition at work there, and I had a delightful and profitable day with its leader, Dr. Carter. He emphatically agreed with my impression, after studying various sites, that Professor Elliot Smith's theory of Egyptian influence was out of the question.

I found these Yucatecos more attractive even than the Americans: speaking Mayan yet, in the towns, admirably organized in unions that were more powerful than many in Europe. Between the almost perpetual sunshine of Mexico—I walked 12 miles in it one day, and the altitude never troubled me—the genial climate of Yucatan, the novelty of life, the friendliness of the people—in places where most of them spoke Spanish I sat talking under the village tree amongst a group of men, women, and children—it was, I considered, the finest two months' vacation I had ever had. After a last glorious week in Havana I embarked on a boat from Argentina for England, by way of the West Indies. How many miles I had covered in that trip the reader may count if he chooses. From London in early September I had sailed to Boston. The boat was late, and I had to leave it at Boston and hurry to Chicago. I had gone on to San Francisco and from Los Angeles to Mexico City, Yucatan, and Cuba. I was mightily refreshed, and as we sailed up the Gulf Stream I set my shoulders to meet the painful problems that awaited me beyond the horizon.

## 10. THE PRIDE BEFORE THE FALL

This book is, as I said, not a diary, an itinerary, or a minute record of humdrum experiences. It is, for those readers of my books who desire it, an explanation of me and therefore an account of the deeper experiences that molded me and shaped the philosophy of life that saved me from becoming bitter and cynical in my age under a heavy burden of ingratitude, malevolence, and humiliation. I find myself neither bitter nor cynical. To my critics, of course, the mildest irony is a sneer, an indictment of fraud or hypocrisy is a sure symptom of hatred. I feel—and surely here I may claim to be the leading expert—rather that I was an almost gay fighter against powerful evils; more light-hearted perhaps than is consistent with the gravity I ascribe to those evils and the cruelty I claim to be inflicted in a social order that could be made immeasurably better in 10 to 20 years. But I will not apologize for my levity. It is more satisfactory to tell those adventures which I encountered on my long pilgrimage that made me whatever I am.

In recounting those contacts with America which may particularly interest American readers I have run into what I must call my old age. Scientific men have now a hope of raising the average age of all who are born sound, live sensibly, and escape accident to 104; though I have never understood why they add the little four to the noble 100. I see, however, that the latest promise is 120 years. It is one of those developments of the near future that will make a mockery of so many fears, so much unimaginative planning, of our myopic generation. Men and women of common sense will not then begin to show the weakness of age until they are long past 80. For reasons which may appear before the end of this narrative I enjoy a foretaste of this promised benefit. I am, in fact, restrained from describing my sixth decade, which mainly occupies this chapter, as the prime of my life only by the fact that I do not even now, on the eve of my 80th birthday, feel any proof of the lowered vitality which is supposed to follow the close of the prime.

At the end of the first World War I began to write books and to creep about the globe delivering lectures more busily than ever. In 1920 I published the largest work I had yet written, "A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists," on which I had been engaged for three years. As I persisted in this Rationalist activity while I was deriving most of my income from lecturing and writing—at this time I wrote for some years on Sir Edward Hulton's papers—for the general public, and my lecture and literary agents warned me that I could not continue to do this, many folk got the idea, which some Rationalists encouraged, that the remuneration was generous. The truth is that I had to conceal from other publishers and lecture societies the scale of payment which I accepted from the Rationalist authorities: \$10 a lecture (\$15 for two in one day) and \$5 per 1,000 words or a 10 percent royalty on books. But the book was highly appreciated except for an anonymous critic in the *New Statesman* who sourly observed that "If the publishers really thought this sort of thing worth doing they might get somebody with at least an elementary capacity to do it." A member of the staff told me that this was written by Bernard Shaw, who still smarted under the critical work on his opinions which I had written, by request, in the "Living Men of Letters Series" in 1914. A more competent and unbiased judge was the historian Professor Bury, who said that no other man could have written the book. It may be interesting, too, in view of later events, to give here the opinion of the Right Hon. John M. Robertson. He wrote me:



Dear McCabe:

Please accept with my best wishes the New Year and my hearty thanks for the too kind account you have given me in your Dictionary. I have just reviewed it with great pleasure, for the *Guide*, trying to rouse readers to the paying point of appreciation . . . I congratulate you on your very high level of accuracy.

J. M. ROBERTSON.

Five years later he made the most deadly of the attacks that completely ruined my position in the Rationalist world, though nothing whatever of a personal nature had happened between us in the five years.

Of lectures I need say only that I was delivering, mainly for Rationalist and cognate societies, about 150 a year. My engagement book reads almost like the diary of a commercial traveler, and the fee rarely justified me in lunching or dining in trains. A few sandwiches in my pocket and a glass of beer at any station on the route were the rule. There were, apart from the low fees, now four birds in the nest in London and I had to economize. In 1914, as my slender bank account grew, I had bought a nice house with good garden, in a pleasanter part of London (Golders Green). I built two additional rooms on to it during those 10 years and made it a home of which, I thought, I could be modestly proud; just completing my adornment of it when the time came for me to quit it in sorrow and loneliness. For 10 or so years, without counting the years before 1914, I had at least the relief of coming home, tired, from lectures or debates, to a circle of happy and welcoming children. Never in my life have I laid a finger on a child. My sons and daughters were, and are, my best friends.

In 1917, as I have described, I spent seven or eight months in America: in 1919 a couple of months lecturing to the troops in Germany; and in 1920 I was eight months away on my luckless Australian tour under a professional agent. In 1922 I decided to visit Athens and Crete, to see and photograph the ruins for the purpose of lectures; and my weird experience of stricken Europe gives vividness to my mental picture of Europe today, for I had to travel through Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Yugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, and Greece; and beyond Belgium every land was a beggar in rags.

The most hectic feature was the dance of the exchanges. The value of money had fallen so low in Germany that the first paper I bought there had a cartoon blithely making fun of it. A man tries to board a street-car in Berlin with a parcel under his arm when the conductor points out to him that parcels are not admitted. "But," he protests, "this is my car-fare." I traveled with the Germans, speaking their language fairly fluently, for 12 hours, and I admired their patience and good nature at least in the Rhine provinces and Bavaria. In Austria the exchange was worse, the spirit of the people even better. At the frontiers a young lieutenant with a small moustache and a large saber, on special railway duty, told me how little money I was allowed to take into Austria and asked me how much I had. I believe it amounted, as I had not been able to book beyond Vienna, to more than 6,000,000 kronen—at par a krone would be about 50c—and he politely demanded it and I politely refused. He nervously solved the problem by telling me that I could go this time but must not do it again. I arrived in Vienna at midnight to find that there was not a room available in the central part, and the police told my drunken cabman to take me to a native hotel in the suburbs. But next day the British Consul sent a man with me to one of the most exclusive hotels with a virtual order to let me have one of the rooms the keys of which were "under the counter." To intimidate me the head clerk said that the tariff was 50,000 kronen a day for bed and breakfast, but, being now a millionaire, I signed at once. Poor Austria, 50,000 kronen were then just a dollar! They had to print notes of from one krone to 500,000 kronen. I still have a one krone note which some poor

storekeeper had to give me in working out the luxury tax on a small purchase. Its value then was about one 500th of a cent.

The general poverty was as cruel as it is today everywhere in Europe. The Prater Strasse was thick with bold amateur prostitutes, thousands of them nice Viennese girls. The workers were on the edge of civil war. I stood amongst them on the steps of the Opera House while one of their leaders addressed them. There was a double line of horse-police, and at some fiery word of the speaker their sabers flashed in the sun. I ran with the crowd, but a sensible officer curbed his men. Next day I was at lunch in a restaurant in the Ring, the noble boulevard that encircles the central part of Vienna, when the waiters rushed out and began to close the shutters. On the plea that I was a British journalist—I had, in fact, a commission from the *London Star* for the trip—I passed the police at the door and raced to the civic hall. In half a mile of the broad boulevard at mid-day I was the only living person. At the civic hall I found thousands of armed police, with troops in the background, confronting the grim empty mouths, as if they were the mouths of cannon, of the streets leading into the Ring from the suburbs, and every store in the central city was prepared for a siege. A captain of police confirmed to me what the workers had told me when I had drunk beer with them in the Prater on Sunday afternoon. Half the workers of Vienna had an average of 40c a week and the other half nothing. I had seen Genoa trembling on the brink of civil war 20 years earlier, and I was presently to feel the same excitement in Athens.

I left the fine-natured Viennese as soon as I could, for I was buying their bread and wine at a monstrously low price and I ate, as usual, in every type of eating place in the city. From Budapest, in which I intended to spend a few days on my return journey, I traveled, by way of Belgrade, Sofia, Adrianople, and Dedeağatch, to the Greek junction where I could rejoin the express to Athens, in trains which stopped at every village. There was no water on them, and, flinging to the wind (for it was August and hot) my instructions to avoid drinking water, I joined the rush from the train to the village pumps. For three days I had only one poor meal a day, and that in the afternoon. One day it was cakes bought from a village woman, the second day bread and cheese, the third day—when from the train I had espied a vendor on the street in a Greek village—coarse bread and horseflesh. Yet the novelty of it all—booking at each frontier in a crowd of peasants and fighting to sell my English pounds, traveling in a Bulgarian train with a wildly hilarious and drunken crowd of picturesque peasants on a holiday, sitting in the dust for hours in the Salonica station yard with a choice bunch of hoboos and thieves, watching the eagles circle over the train on the Macedonian mountains, gliding through the Valley of Roses (and nightingales) while I chattered in French, Italian, or German with a cultivated Turkish Jewess, Czech diplomatic courier, and an Italian artist, and at last the first thrilling glimpse from the train of the Parthenon in moonlight—and the brilliant southern sun made it the most glorious holiday of my life.

But I must fly over the crowd of colorful memories of that trip. I was held up in Athens for three weeks by the confusion of the Turkish war. Apart from officials, I was, I saw, sipping beer amidst a throng of Athenians at the foot of the Acropolis, the only one who knew of the terrible defeat their armies had just sustained in Turkey; and a couple of days later I saw the first gaunt soldiers stagger into the city and the police mobilize for an outbreak. My friends at the British Legation begged me to return before the civil war began. But I waited weeks until a small boat sailed for Crete, and about 300 of us—Greeks, Cretans, Syrians, Egyptians—packed ourselves into it, and had a superb day sailing through the Aegaeon Sea.

In a week—a week spent back in the Middle Ages—I thoroughly

studied the wonderful ruins of the old Cretan civilization. Both the "hotels" were full—full also of bugs and fleas, I learned later—and I went native in a sort of hotel up town where little worms floated gaily in the water-decanter, the toilet was just the collar-end of a drain-pipe, a thief stole my passport—a Greek thief already had my watch and chain—and they had neither milk nor butter. Merchants of Candia asked me to run up the British flag over their island; and such was the confusion in Europe that when I returned to Athens and told this to a group of consular and legation officials, one man said, "Why the hell didn't you?" and another, "For God's sake, McCabe, surely even you wouldn't do that." They told me a secret that never got into the European press: that it was French guns, tanks, and officers that had beaten the Greeks for the Turks. Then the long trek back, with a break in Budapest, and I reached London too exhilarated by the rich experiences to be tired. I had throughout the tour roomed at the best hotel available yet the fee for six articles in the *Star* (\$150) paid for the entire expedition. And I understand the chaos of Europe today as realistically as if I had again made that fearful and wonderful journey.

I got back just in time to open a busy lecturing season and, as I have said, next year I made my third, and not happy, voyage to Australia. I have said that a wealthy lady gave me \$500 to take a holiday after my hard and harsh experiences, and I decided to visit Spain and see and photograph the so-called Moorish ruins.

The dictatorship of General de Rivera had begun, for the scandals of the Morocco War were leaking out and the King, who had profited to the extent of millions of pesetas by the frauds, had set up this brutal and sensual officer as military dictator. I saw the fine Spanish people cowering under the lash; saw what life was under this cheap imitator of Mussolini's outrage; saw, especially in Seville, the smooth blend of piety and sin which characterizes "Catholic countries." Priests were still placidly advertising in the Spanish papers for young ladies to go under their "protection." I had for 20 years been closely interested in Spain. Now I knew it, and I was prepared for the revolution that broke seven years afterwards.

A Catholic professor (Peers) published a work, "The Spanish Tragedy," in 1936 in which he sourly criticized my book on the revolution ("Spain in Revolt") and told his readers that only men who had not visited Spain questioned that its people had been perfectly contented under the dictator. I had said repeatedly in my book that I had traveled from end to end of Spain and spent weeks in Madrid under de Rivera. The professor's book was reverently reviewed in the press: mine had been almost entirely ignored. Another book on Spain before which the reviewers bowed was the "History of Spain" by Sir Charles Petrie and the French Catholic writer Louis Bertrand. It is a tissue of false statements. So the world wags.

The Little Blue Book, "The Moorish Civilization in Spain," which I published three years later is based on this personal study and upon the works of Liberal Spanish professors who, knowing Arabic well, had digested the Spanish Arab literature stored in musty libraries, which is again under Franco locked away from scholars, while American and British professors assure the public that I exaggerate the splendor of the Arab civilization in Spain and its influence on medieval Europe. Read the description of that civilization just 1,000 years ago in S. P. Scott's (American) "Moorish Empire in Europe" or Lane Poole's smaller but weightier "Moors in Spain," and contrast with that the condition of the country today, five centuries after its "liberation." But even these matters though they are important amongst the experiences that make me still a rebel at an age when any decent man is reasonably expected to have "matured," I must pass over rapidly. I had no unpleasant experience with the authorities, though many friends who knew how little

the reactionaries in Spain loved me, had bade me good-bye almost in tears. I was discreet. My friends should have seen me take off my sombrero and almost sweep the ground with it when a canon frowned at me for photographing a door of Seville cathedral one Sunday, and how his face so changed at my Castilian courtliness that I feared I was going to be invited to lunch with the archbishop.

In the autumn of the same year I was nominated a delegate to the International Freethought Congress at Paris, where I made a long impromptu speech in French. They felt that my intention was good. An American lady who shall be nameless read a paper which was understood to be in French but my English colleagues mistook it for the Brooklyn dialect. It was a discouraging function. In 1904 I had seen thousands of delegates make Paris ring with songs—we sang as we marched round the famous church on the summit of Montmartre—that to a religious ear sounded blasphemous. In 1924 the meetings attracted 100 to 300 hearers. Paris was less religious than ever but the Socialists and Communists, like those of Germany, who were to pay so heavy a penalty for their blunders, now thought the power of the Church need no longer be assailed, and the Liberal bourgeois, who had been for 50 years the main body of the anti-clerical army, were now out to pacify Alsace-Lorraine and to check the growth of Socialism—in political alliance with the Vatican.

Somewhere about this time, too, I had an experience that may amuse. The publishers of the Encyclopedia Biblica decided to issue a popular edition of that learned and liberal work in fortnightly parts. They arranged with the Rationalist Association that I should, anonymously, write replies, to be inserted in each part, to the more Conservative biblical students, and for a few months I had much fun. The famous biblical scholar Schmiedel cooperated with me through Dr. Black, one of the editors of the Encyclopedia. Black, a wealthy Scot, partner in the publishing firm of that name, was still officially a divine of the Scottish Church, but he became a warm and esteemed friend of mine. He arranged lectures for me in Edinburgh and took the chair; and I spent several week ends in his house. One night in London he took me to dine at the Ritz with two millionaires: Sir John Murray, the scientific financier of the Challenger Expedition, and the contractor Sir John Jackson, who had just won the contract for the Trans-Andean railway and told me that he would make a profit of \$1,125,000 out of it.

It will be understood that the great variety in my work brought me into close contact with both poor and rich, so that my experience was nicely balanced. I remember once in a coal shortage during the first World War going to South Wales to give two lectures on a Sunday. Between the afternoon and evening lectures I had tea in a miner's cottage, and rested before a coal-fire that roared up the chimney and made the little room a hot-house. Three days later, lecturing in the midlands for my agent, I was invited by an unimpressive little man who had been in the audience to "Come to my place and have a cup of tea." He bundled me into an ambulance with two elderly ladies who were hardly more impressive. It was, I found, Baron Lee, and he drove me out to one of the historic country mansions. We kept our coats on while he piloted me along two lengthy and stone-cold galleries and on to a small room in which he had the single fire which he was allowed. I told him, to his uproarious amusement, of my experience a few days before in a miner's cottage. On another occasion, in a Scottish miner's cottage, I occupied the one-bed that the tiny home possessed; and soon after I was entertained by a wealthy lady in a house that had once been Sir Walter Scott's. In one town where I lectured—the fee for these was generally \$5—for a poor group, a baker carried me off for the night, and I found that I was sleeping in the bed which he, being a night-worker, had occupied all day. Infinite, and not always pleasant, were the devices for



"putting me up" to save the expense of a hotel; and even the hotels were sometimes of the type which I once heard a commercial traveler describe as "six bob (\$1.50) a day and a little bit off the missus."

There were, of course, brighter chapters; indeed, on the whole this was, up to that time, the most interesting, most stimulating, and most enjoyable decade of my life. In London I had many invitations to dine and open an entertaining debate in social clubs. My friends Earl and Countess Russell (elder brother of Bertrand Russell and his second wife, with whom I was friendly) opened a small cosmopolitan club and frequently had me dine and lead a debate there. A social club for ladies in the West End just as frequently called me up for dinner and a debate—until one night I fell heavily from grace. An important lady member of the committee and good friend of mine tempted me to take as the thesis of my next debate: "That women are intellectually inferior to men." We both had a serious idea of checking the wilder excesses to which the long agitation for the suffrage had led, and as our debates were understood to be amusing I thought that I could disguise my censure in the dress of a paradox. Unfortunately the other side brought Lady Betty Balfour as their champion and, my word . . . "All our male idols turn out to have clay feet," I remember her exclaiming.

Often a country lecture was a rare opportunity to see an old friend. Whenever I lectured in the west I had a day or two with the novelist Eden Phillpotts, one of the most entertaining of hosts and a close friend of mine until my breach with the Rationalist Association. He dedicated one of his novels to me, but his alarmed publisher made him cut out the dedication. In Scotland I had jovial days with Judge Wilson, author of the large standard work on Carlyle. At one place I used to meet the architect of the local cathedral, a secret Rationalist. At another the group of local Freethinkers included the cathedral organist, who read to us a scurrilous epic of the Old Testament, in which he relieved his feelings. I had the hospitality of strict parsons, lewd Atheists, bankers, doctors, barbers, and every type of man.

In London, George Moore told me just to send him a wire in the morning if I cared to dine with him that night, and we had many an evening together. Wells occasionally asked me to some function. I remember once when he summoned me to attend a crowded (and international) social meeting at his house he, standing at the door of the drawing room and seeing me coming, alarmed his guests by calling out, in his rather squeaky voice, "Hello, here comes the famous blasphemer." But we were not cordial friends until the last few years of his life. In 1926 and 1927 he conceived the idea that it would be socially useful to get folk to believe in a sort of God as a Great Captain, a leader of the race. He really meant little beyond my atheistic creed. I have the three books in which he expounded his ideas, and on the margins he has neatly written "From H. G. Wells, in the hope of a speedy conversion," "To Joseph McCabe, surnamed the Godless," and finally (on the flyleaf of "The Soul of a Bishop") "Joseph McCabe, from his co-religionist H. G. Wells." He treated me handsomely, classing me with Professor Metchnikoff as a "benevolent Atheist," in his "God the Invisible King." But in fact he was at that time rather annoyed with me. In a literary controversy with him I had tried to make him define his God more clearly, and he wanted to avoid that. However, I had the satisfaction to live to see him come round to my position on the only two points on which we had differed. He began to use more scalding language than I did about the Roman Church and to declare himself an Atheist.

The Hon. John Collier, the painter, married to a daughter of T. H. Huxley, always asked me to his private show, at which I met Mrs. Huxley and other distinguished folk; and at the house of my oldest friend, the solicitor and author E. S. P. Haynes, who was married to a granddaughter of Huxley, where I most frequently dined, there was always a

brilliant and stimulating company. Professor Haddon entertained me at Cambridge and took the chair at my lecture, and at Oxford I first met Professor Haldane, then a brilliant and promising young graduate. I was invited to Glasgow and Bangor (Wales) Universities at pressure from the bolder of the divinity students, and the result was devastating.

Scientific men I usually met at the annual dinner of the Rationalist Press Association. As one of the chief speakers I sat among the gods at the head table, and I found them generally dull. One year I sat next to Sir E. Ray Lankester, leading British zoologist and, according to my friend Phillpotts, a charming man, but I found him unentertaining; for which, doubtless, he blamed me. Next year I sat next to the literary star of the evening, Israel Zangwill. He concluded the short speech he made by saying (with an eye on the reporters), "I am too much of a Mac-cabean ever to be a McCabean"; and when he sat down he whispered in my ear, "Not that there's much difference between us." He left immediately afterwards, and Lady Leon, who sat on my right and was supposed to enjoy our brilliant conversation, sighed and said to me, "What a bore."

I was in fact bored at the Olympian table and I told the authorities that I preferred sprightliness to distinction, so they bade me choose my company. Next year I sat with three charming young ladies—an American, an Italian, and a Brazilian Jewess—and the sparks flew. But, alas, the chairman died that evening in the middle of his heretical speech, and the ladies would not come again, nor could I replace them the following year. And just here was one of my crimes. My letter was represented by J. M. Robertson and the authorities, when we came to quarrel, as a conceited—in fact, feeble-minded—complaint that there was no one amongst even the highest guests who was fit to sit at table with me!

The truth is that I was never a "tuft-hunter." I have always preferred a chat with a duchess' parlourmaid to one with the duchess if the maid were the more entertaining. Lady — invited me to a week end in the country but I knew that she was a severe Protestant, so I declined, telling her that I was an Atheist and she would not find my conversation agreeable. A peeress once proposed to honor my home with a visit, but, scenting that there was some interesting reason for this heroism, I said that I would call at *her* house. Over the glittering tea-table I heard the reason. I was to promise not to make a public criticism of her daughter, who had announced in the press, and the mother confirmed it, that under spirit influence, and without any lessons or practice, she painted beautiful sacred pictures. I knew from the lady's husband that it was a hoax. I promised to be silent if Conan Doyle and the Spiritualists did the same; and they did. I invited few folk to my home, but some strange visitors found it. A young priest came one day to convert me, but my housekeeper routed him on the doorstep without consulting me. Three times Catholic ladies came from Ireland to tell me of shameless frauds practiced on them by the clergy and nuns, but since, they said, no lawyer in Ireland dare take a case against the Church I was powerless. Once in a London court I was called as expert witness when a famous abbey tried, improperly, to secure a legacy. The monk put in a disarming letter from his abbot; and in summing up the judge said "fortunately I am not called upon to say what I think of that letter."

My mail had by this time become large and interesting. Professor Jacques Loeb, the famous American physiologist, wrote me long and frequent letters until he died. While my colleagues in the Rationalist movement deprecated my "impulsiveness" and the public were assured from every side that Materialism was dead, Loeb, one of the men best qualified to judge, pressed me to be more emphatic with the public and say that science had completely proved the truth of Materialism. I remember how once after a Rationalist dinner a lady-tutor from Oxford University told me that she had come expressly to hear me "blaspheme"

and had been bitterly disappointed; and next moment my friend G. H. Putnam, passing by, hissed in my ear, "You fiery little Irishman." Some of my books were translated and reached far-away circles. The Japanese and the Italian education authorities asked permission to translate my "End of the World." The Russian Liberal prince P. Pehovscaro, before the revolution, translated my "War and the Churches"; and after the Bolshevik Revolution I saw a good deal of Miljukov and other Russian Liberal refugees in London, who met at the house of my friend Maria Levinskaia, the brilliant pianist. A French academician wrote a glowing introduction to the French translation of my "Treitschke." He calls it "a masterly work"; which is generous considering that I dictated it to a stenographer in five days. A Danish-American tells me that Georg Brandes' book on Ferrer is just a translation of my book; though he had never asked permission, nor did he mention it when I met him. Professor Simarro, of Madrid University, did courteously ask permission to translate most of my book, and he included these chapters, with proper acknowledgment, in his larger work "El Proceso Ferrer." A professor in Ireland corresponded with me for years and talked about translations, as did various professors in South America. A miner in Borneo or New Guinea, I forget which, promised me a large share in the gold mine he was about to discover, and two Hindu youths came to my house with gifts "from the city of Lahore." Little trophies flowed in: a precious fragment of old Tibetan porcelain from the loot of the Imperial Palace at Peking, bits of gold from South African and Australian mines, rare books, skins, weapons . . . Once a small king or large chief somewhere in the hinterland of west central Africa asked me, through a Negro friend, to come out and educate his people.

I will not say, in the French phrase, that I had arrived, for I had never set myself a goal on the horizon. To do my propagandist work effectively I must do it well. That was the measure of my ambition. All my life I have hand written my work, and at a rough estimate I must have written not far short of 15,000,000 words in 50 years; and this with my thousands of lectures and my oversea tours may be accepted as an honest life's work. Novelists like George Moore and Eden Phillpotts, who ordinarily wrote or dictated 1,000 words a day, were astonished at my output. Moore insisted that mine was good writing—but in a seven-hour day I could not do less than 3,000 words and, though I rewrote page after page, sometimes three times, I could make little improvement. Early in my literary career I had given myself long courses of slowly reading in works of the best writers of English; not in the least in the mood of imitation, if it had been possible, but to fix a standard of good English in my mind so that it might insensibly influence my rapid writing. I am no artist; and that is, perhaps, the chief faculty I desiderate. Often do I fancy that the pen in my hand is a brush, but I know my limitations. Overshadowing all these velleities was my dominant passion to teach my readers or hearers some truth that would help to give them a sound philosophy of life and never to compromise with untruth or injustice.

If my manner seems at times too ironic—many prefer to say truculent, and Edward Clodd once said that reading me was like having a pistol fired close to his ear—I may plead that in my long pilgrimage I have seen so much compromise, so much weakening in old age, that I am steeled against them. I have mentioned Clodd, the banker-author, for many years Chairman of the Rationalist Association. He did not like me, and for years he pointed to the Rationalist work—what there was of it—of the dramatic critic William Archer as model work. But if there was one subject on which Clodd allowed himself violence it was Spiritualism; and, although the fact was discreetly veiled by his friends, Archer ended his days a Spiritualist. Robert Blatchford, the Socialist leader, was the model of others, and he also became a Spiritualist; and I still have the friendly letter in which Blatchford confesses to me that he changed from Materialism to Spiritualism on no evidence whatever

but because a dearly loved wife had died and he forced himself to believe that he would see her again. Speaking of her death he wrote me:

"As my daughter expressed it 'that little ivory lady on the bed is very beautiful but she is not mother.' So I felt. So I feel. But one cannot argue about a feeling of that kind."

Thomas Hardy, whom Clodd thought that he knew intimately, was another of his heroes. He was heavily sarcastic when I omitted Hardy from my "Dictionary of Rationalists." Phillpotts, however, who did know Hardy intimately, had warned me that after his second marriage, late in life, he began to go to church—in silk hat and frock coat, if I remember rightly—every Sunday. I had then written and asked Hardy if I might include him amongst Rationalists. He sent me a pitifully evasive reply, quibbling about the meaning of the word Rationalist, but making it clear that he was not to be included. He was not the only one. Sir J. G. Frazer, author of "The Golden Bough," wrote me an angry protest when he saw his name in a list of the men I proposed to include. I had to listen in silence to the gibes of Rationalists who wondered how I had been so careless as to overlook the names of these distinguished Rationalists.

In brief, from the year I entered the monastery and throughout the half-century of my public life I saw so much compromise with truth, from petty insincerities and posing to lying and deception, that in reaction I became suspicious, blunt, and intransigent. I have never advised inquirers to blurt out heretical opinions if this injured them or their families, and I have, on the few occasions on which I was consulted, warned secretly skeptical priests or clergymen that secession would mean a painful struggle, and I always felt lenient if they evaded it. I was not myself built that way. After comparing notes with other ex-priests I have met, from Paris to San Francisco, I am convinced that the majority of ministers of religion of all denominations are skeptical in some degree, often in regard to the whole of religion. During the last decade British Catholics have often wondered how I learned facts, such as the cost and procedure of the canonization of Thomas More, which the higher clergy endeavored to keep secret. Knowledge of them was sent to me, through a mutual friend, by a priest who was chaplain to a large convent in London—"Tell them to McCabe," he used to say to my friend when he learned a new scandal—who was so skeptical that when he died, a few years ago, and the dear nuns expected all the money he had saved to be returned to them, they were horrified to learn that he had left it all to the Zoological Gardens and a popular theater (the Old Vic), in which alone he was interested in his later years. The few instances I have been able to give in this book will suffice to show that my experience continued from the religious to the secular life, and I became a rebel in the world of rebels. George Eliot once said of one of the Rationalists, the historian Lecky, that he seemed to think that "while two and two certainly did make four it was not advisable to push it too far." Somebody is apt to pay for it when you allow a man to say that two and two make 22.

But I seemed nonetheless to be appreciated and honored. Pride like hatred, is a sentiment I know not, but it would be vapid to say that I did not contemplate my position in my 50's with warm satisfaction. Young professors who tell their pupils, as is reported to me, that I cannot be a scholar because I am not a "specialist" forget that there is such a thing as a specialist on religion: religion viewed objectively as a collection of statements which one needs an extensive knowledge of science, history, and sociology to examine thoroughly. I have explained how circumstances made me an authority on religion in this sense. I had, it is true, though with much less expert knowledge, as definite a creed concerning the social, political, and economic life, and young men sometimes ask why I did not give at least as much time to this. No political



or economic organization wanted me or would use my work, as I will explain later, as long as my name was so conspicuously connected with Atheism. So I concentrated on my work and it seemed to be appreciated in an ever-widening circle. Few Rationalists know the full extent of the labor and discomfort involved in my work but I was, I thought, high in their esteem and affection.

As the sixth decade of my life wore on little clouds of doubt began to appear. I had no illusions about my real position in the *headquarters* of the Association. At an early date of my connection with them incidents had occurred which, though I never spoke of them and will not now, rankled in certain memories. The man who never forgets is not the man whom you have wronged but the man you detected in wrong-doing. Small incidents continued. Letters sent me through the office were habitually and unmistakably opened. Even a registered letter was "opened in mistake" (to see if perchance someone sent me money). The proofs of my works were so richly decorated with "corrections" that it seemed to become, and I had private assurance that it was, a pastime to "bait McCabe." I have had 30 publishers in Britain or America but none except the Rationalist publisher, with the poorest staff, ever put more than one polite query in a sheet (16 pages). Somehow my Rationalist writings were so bad that the margins of the proofs were embroidered with corrections of my style; and in cases in which I made a quiet inquiry I found that the work was done by men who had never written and could not decently write a line and knew not one hundredth-part what I knew about the subject. Visitors to the office from the provinces or America increasingly requested that the tone in which they heard me discussed by its leading officials disgusted them . . . The crust was blown off in 1926, and I was appalled at the volcanic stuff that poured from below and still more appalled to find myself coldly abandoned to the flood by almost the entire body of the 3,000 members of the Rationalist Association.

## 11. THE FALL

The Story of My Calamities, to borrow Abelard's famous phrase, began in the summer of 1925, when I was compelled to leave my wife and abandon to her the home that I had labored so hard to make a comfortable nest for myself and my family. It will be enough to recall that I have explained in an earlier chapter how the bitterness of the extreme wing of the agitators for woman's rights, or against man's wrongs, had entered my home. In time there were poignant scenes, and it was clearly necessary to separate. My children agreed, and, as I notified my wife several times of my intention and she did not ask me to reconsider it, it is fair to say that we parted by mutual consent. She went, with other ladies, on a three months propagandist tour in the north in the summer of 1925, and I have never seen her, though I maintain her, since. I knew when I set out for America in September that I was quitting my treasured home forever.

Whether or no this quarrel seemed to the Rationalist authorities to prepare the ground for a breach, since it might enable them to represent me (as they did) as quarrelsome and the cause of all the trouble, I shall never know. For years after their virtual expulsion of me they had my wife as a guest at the annual dinner. Sir Robert Stout wrote me that they read this with astonishment in New Zealand. But the immediate pretext arose out of my painful experiences in America.

I was to lecture during the last three months of 1925 for the Chicago Rationalist University Society. In the previous winter Mr. and Mrs. Percy Ward, who ran that society—it had, of course, no connection with the university, though several professors and Mr. Clarence Darrow lent

it their support—visited London and persuaded me to do this. The society was, they said, flourishing, and if I would join forces with Ward for a few months we could count upon a notable success. I was entirely unaware that they had been arrested and tried on an unpleasant charge, which was lovingly starred on the front pages of the Chicago papers, a year earlier, and, though Clarence Darrow got them acquitted, the society was badly damaged. This was known to Freethinkers all over America yet not one of them gave me the mildest warning. I set out with a buoyant expectation that dulled the pain of having had to abandon my home. The boat was delayed, and I left it at Newfoundland, and made the long overland journey to Chicago, where they boisterously and humbly welcomed the innocent abroad. The theater was overcrowded for the first lecture, and when I saw many leave it the moment Ward appeared on the platform I was told that a few did not like his forcible Atheism.

On successive Sundays the audience shrank to a few hundred and I, as usual, set my teeth to overcome the mysterious obstacle. The Wards lived in the hotel in which I took a room in the suburbs, and one day, in the fifth or sixth week of my program, a chance word from a servant of the hotel opened my eyes. I demanded full information from a friend, and I felt sick when I realized the foulness of the puddle into which I had stepped. I could get no satisfaction from the chairman and directors of the society and, after wearily working through the long program of lectures and debates, I shook the dust of Chicago from my heels.

I had made engagements to lecture in Detroit and other cities, as far as Kansas City and Omaha, where I found my fine genial doctor-friend somewhat colder on account, he acknowledged, of my associations in Chicago. But he and other friends were as generous as ever and, after a couple of days in Denver, much of the time in talk with Judge Ben B. Lindsey, I went to San Francisco, where my Labor friend Macdonald, as generous as he was competent in these matters, had arranged finely attended lectures, and to Los Angeles, where a lawyer, one of the hundreds of grand men I had met in America, arranged a successful fortnight. I tore myself away at last and took train for Mexico City. Several friends had thrust \$100 bills on me to salve my afflictions, and I wanted to see, and later lecture on, the Mexican and Mayan ruins. But I have already told how I traveled, slowly and most pleasantly, through Mexico, Yucatan, and Cuba.

This little book affords no space for the many amusing incidents of my world tours. It is enough that I was refreshed and ready to begin again. In these days when we read that statesmen are "exhausted" because they have spent two days in a week in a plane it will seem no light matter that I had traveled from St. John, Newfoundland, to Los Angeles, delivering 40 lectures and holding six debates by the way, and then from Los Angeles to southern Yucatan. But this second part of my pilgrimage was exhilarating—the altitude of Central Mexico gave me no trouble—and the sail home, by way of the West Indies, in the grand early summer weather of those latitudes, made me forget Chicago and bravely face the new life in London.

There was another, perhaps more powerful, stimulant. From Kansas City I had gone to Girard and come away with my first commission for Mr. Haldeman-Julius; I wrote the first of my Little Blue Books between intervals of lecturing in Los Angeles. I wrote the second in my cabin (with an upturned trunk for desk) or the smoking room of the liner between Havana and Liverpool. How I wrote the next half dozen between stretches of painting, paper-hanging, and scrubbing floors I will tell presently. I was fully alive once more, and I was far from dreaming that the heaviest blow of all in that miserable year awaited me where I expected a welcome. Except from my four children, who dined and went to a show with me, there seemed to be no welcome.

I had not yet settled in an apartment when the Rationalist officials wrote me that Ward had defaulted to the extent of \$570, and I was "reminded" that I had undertaken to pay if he did not. He had, before I went, asked me to arrange with the Rationalist Association to send a large number of its books to be sold at my lectures, and as they apparently distrusted Ward—it seemed to me afterwards that they knew of his trial—I made myself "responsible for the payment." They now contended that I meant that I would pay for the books if Ward failed to do so. I could not be so foolish, and my solicitor, a prominent member of the Association, pronounced their claim "absurd." What I promised to do was to make sure that every Monday Ward sent a check for the books sold on the previous day. I demanded and received that assurance each Monday for the first five or six weeks, when it became useless. Only two checks had been sent.

I hesitate to bore the reader with these details. In fact, from an earlier chapter most readers will sense the meaning at once when I say that J. M. Robertson (now the Right Honorable, as he was made a member of the King's Privy Council to console him for deposing him from his under-secretaryship) was looking for work and money and anxious to play first violin again in the Rationalist orchestra; that the chairman of the Association now was a close friend of his and an ardent admirer of Bradlaugh, and that Bradlaugh's daughter was one of the chief directors.

The time was ripe for getting rid of the inconvenient critic. The supposed debt was a pretext. Even if they had regarded it as a legal debt, a private note to a dozen Rationalists would have brought the money by return of mail. Alternatively they could have had the large remaining stock of books sent back from Chicago, and the Vice-President of the Society, my esteemed friend Harry Meltzer, wrote them that he would see to it, but they made no reply. The books were in any case largely useless stock, but they insisted on the full price. I was "framed." But the reader will not understand the attitude of 99 in 100 of the Rationalists who had so long acclaimed me if I do not enter into some detail. I still have the correspondence and documents and do not rely on memory.

I was at first puzzled and did not take the matter seriously, but in a few weeks I received a peculiar letter proposing that a sum of \$200 held (improperly) on trust for me and quite unconnected with the organization should be appropriated to pay half the debt. I was annoyed, and I compelled them to pay me the money. On August 24 the head of the firm of Watts and Co., the publishers for the Association, sent me this alarming letter:

"It is idle to dispute our claim that you are legally responsible for the Ward debt. The evidence in our possession is absolutely conclusive on the point. If there are any special reasons why we should not *press the claim*, we shall be glad to hear of them. Failing any proof that such reasons exist, it is obvious that *the account against you should be treated in the ordinary way.*"

I asked for a copy of their "absolutely conclusive evidence," and it consisted still of the one word "responsible." My solicitor pronounced it "absurd," and I refused to do anything further. I was already virtually expelled from the Association. But this did not suffice for my enemies. On October 1, I received this letter from the Association signed Charles A. Watts (though not he but the secretary had written the name):

"At our usual monthly meeting last evening, only two Directors being absent, the following motion was unanimously agreed to:

"That the Board of Directors of this Association, having read the letter of Mr. C. A. Watts, dated Aug. 24, 1926, to Mr. Joseph McCabe re the money owing on account of goods forwarded to Mr. Ward and Mr. McCabe's reply thereto, are of the opinion that Mr. McCabe

made himself responsible for the debt and regret that he should think otherwise; but in view of his past services on behalf of the Association the Directors advise that, *for the present at least*, no legal action be taken in the matter so far as his liability is concerned."

Was ever a man before drummed so ignominiously out of a movement to which, with heavy sacrifice and at small pay, he had devoted the better half of his life? I had been the chief lecturer and writer for the organization from its start, and these men who talked to me as an employer talks to the junior office-boy who has been caught rifling the petty cash had never made a sacrifice for it and in some cases had not been connected with it until a few years before. I will confess, with a becoming sigh, that my answer was—well, not to put too fine a point upon it, was vitriolic. Looking back upon the affair 20 years later I coldly feel that it was an incredible outrage. There is only one explanation. They were making certain of their expulsion of me without daring to say that they expelled me.

I went my solitary way, rather sadly, but sustained by the inspiring work which, through all these miseries, I was doing for Mr. Haldeman-Julius. That year I wrote the 50 Little Blue Books—did you find them bitter and cynical?—which sold many millions of copies in America and did more service for Rationalism than did the work in Britain on which this Association was now spending large sums. I will explain presently how I got through that bleak year, but, though I had resolved to forget the malevolence and become a knight-errant, I was drawn again into the fray and received a worse blow than ever.

I was easily deceived about the repercussion in the body of the movement when some members came to tell me that the majority bitterly resented what had happened, and I allowed my friends to force the executive to call an Extraordinary General Meeting of the members for March 12, 1928. Naturally a shower of letters had reached headquarters when my customary and lively monthly article disappeared, without explanation, from the organ of the Association, and the year wore on without any notification of lectures by me. Indeed the more malicious of the directors ventured upon a step which added to the bewilderment of the members. They broke my one remaining connection with the body, and directed the clerks to black out my name from the list of Honorary Associates. In reply to astonished inquiries some were cowardly enough to say that the clerks had done this without authorization. Others protested that they thought that they were carrying out my wish. The truth, I heard, was that some of the more truculent directors held a meeting and passed this motion of expulsion.

But there were graver intrigues. In the course of the winter Sir Robert Stout, Chief Justice of New Zealand, sent me, with great indignation, a copy of a letter he had received from Mr. Charles Watts, Vice-President of the Association, in reply to his request for an explanation. Stout was a man of strict character. Lady Stout was an emphatic puritan, and the reply to them was nicely calculated to put an end to their warm friendship for me. The letter told them that I had abandoned my wife in order to live with another woman, and the directors of the Association had felt that it was important to protect it from scandal by getting rid of me. One of the few London Rationalists who still clung to me told me that he had raised complaints at one of their meetings, and the chairman of the directors had taken him aside and assured him that they were compelled to take the action they did because a scandal in connection with me and a woman was expected to break at any time. I may conclude that the officials were using this poisoned weapon in their defense extensively. Another member, a friend of Robertson but a fool, stopped me in the street and, after some odd questions about my health, blurted out that he had heard from Robertson that I was going