EIGHTY YEARS A REBEL

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By JOSEPH McCABE
EIGHTY YEARS A REBEL

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By JOSEPH McCabe

Copyright, 1947
By E. Haldeman-Julius

HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS
GIRARD, KANSAS

Printed in the United States of America
VERY REV. FR. ANTONY
(Two months before quitting monastery)
JOSEPH McCabe Today, at 80
JOSEPH McCabe's Cottage, at 22 St., George's Road, Golders Green, London, England
1. THE FIRST LESSON

It is time to tell the story of my life. The bell that counts the passing hours, the years, of a man's life will soon break upon my ears with an inexorable 80 strokes. How often I have heard its note; flinging its music merrily upon the air at first, changing to a manly vibrancy in my prime, mellowing and deepening with age as if it were preparing to deliver the solemn parting knell. Not that I have yet detected any warning that I must presently "wrap the drapery of my couch about me and lie down to pleasant dreams." The memory of an old man is like that of a traveler who returns from a foreign land. Behind him the vista grows dim and contracts, like the slow fade-out of a picture on the screen. And if that is truly characteristic of age my mind is still young. Vivid in my recollection is the first experience that enduringly scarred my mind when, at the age of 4, I saw a great flood encircle and invade my home; and the long train of moving experiences I have had since that date, 76 years ago, are as clear to me as are the foothills from the mountain top. So I would set them down before the haze creeps over them or the acid of senility sours them.

If this were the story of a monotonous and too familiar career, the slow advance along a narrow groove from the cradle to the grave, it would not be worth recording. But accidents of my earlier life made me a wanderer over the earth, a gleaner in the whole field of man's knowledge and close observer of his behavior, and gave a rich color and variety to my pilgrimage. Sixty years of study and writing, usually on seven days out of seven, widened the horizon until I steadily saw this drama of the life of the race as the culmination, to date, and with an immeasurably longer and brighter prospect before it, of the portentously slow uplift of life from the slime of a small globe that basks in the light and heat of one of a billion suns in one of a billion universes. I was impatient to understand every aspect of the drama and the theater so, not eating my way foot by foot through the shelves of a library, as Edison did, nor confining myself to one section, as the expert must, I looked over the vast area of human knowledge and garnered methodically in every field, collecting facts as some collect postage stamps or books or dollars. At the age of 23 the series of lucky accidents that make up my life made me, in a small world, a professor of philosophy, and I constructed the frame of a theory of life into which each new fact of science or history found its place. I became, naturally, a peddler in culture, writing, I think, more books than any other living author—more than 200, at all events—and delivering some 3,000 or 4,000 lectures in cities that dot the map from Vancouver to Invercargill.

But more appealing to me than the stimulating truth of science or the pageant of history was, always, the drama of life today, in this hour of dark confusion between the death of an old and tragic past and the birth of a new and cleaner age. Still one of my few pleasures is a sort of aloof contact with my fellows, mingling with them and watching their faces in the crowded streets. I have visited hundreds of cities, in a score of lands, and have found more interest in the faces of the people than in their historic monuments or the modern achievements in which they take such pride. In friendly, often intimate, conversation I have met most types of men and women—countesses and their dressmakers, abbesses and cocottes, barons and bishops and butchers, miners and millionaires, heads of states and universities and learned societies. I have lectured in churches and universities, in asylums for the insane.
and hobo-colleges, in slums and in drawing rooms on Fifth Avenue. And through it all I felt the mood of cold dispassionate rebellion at the slowness of the march of man, the narrow horizon, the filmy vision of present realities, the blindness to the richer world beyond the hills. So this is the story of a rebel.

But I must launch myself upon my career before I dare claim that my experiences equipped me to be something of a guide to my fellows. One of the truths to which I have held fast against the impact of new fashions in science is that a man's inheritance counts for little in his type of manhood, and this is now regarded as sound psychology. But so many are still interested in the womb from which a man came that I begin with what little I know about the English, Irish, and even Scottish strains that contributed to my blood.

The name McCabe, or Mac-Ab, means Son of the Abbot and puts my clan back in the days, before the 12th century, when even abbots might marry and rear large families in the fear of God and the devil. It is said in some Irish works that in time one family of these Sons of the Abbots became kings of Kerry, but Norman Moore, the learned Celtic scholar, told me that they were pipers to the kings of Kerry. He mockingly sympathized with me on my loss of royal lineage, but I assured him that, knowing what disreputable ruffians these petty Irish kings were, I gladly surrendered my poor shreds of purple and felt that perhaps it was the distant call of the piper in my blood that better explained my itch to make a noise in the world.

The immediate founder of my dynasty was one William McCabe who was steward of Lord Leitrim in Dublin in the closing years of the 18th century. Family folk-lore had it that he was press-ganged for the French war, and when they found that they had caught an exceptionally educated man in the net they made him paymaster of Nelson's fleet. Such, at all events, he was, as an extant paysheet of the Victory testifies. He left a son, Thomas, to treasure and add to his little library. Hanging on the wall in the home of my childhood was a case of books, worn with age, such as not one working man in 10,000 would have in the first half of the 19th century. I remember a slim early volume of Emerson's "Essays," Paley's "Evidences," a Cyclopedia of the Arts and Sciences... But in the early forties fate dealt Ireland the blow from which it has never recovered, the Potato Famine, and scattered its people over the world. Thomas McCabe packed up his books and his children and embarked upon one of the stinking little tubs that crossed the churlish Irish Sea. Liverpool's vacant spaces were already full of fugitives, and he somehow—it was before the era of railways—got to the small silk-weaving town of Macclesfield 40 miles away, where his eldest son, William Thomas, my father, learned to ply the handloom and where, some years later, he met and married the dark and slender Scottish-English girl Harriet Kirk, my mother.

There was some romance in the meeting. While William McCabe was penning grave long letters on the stirring Mediterranean events—some fool who married into the family gave them to her baby to tear up and relieve its temper—in a cubby-hole of the Victory, my maternal great-grandfather, Captain Hill, a British soldier of yeoman stock, spluttering patriotism and piety with hallowed fierceness, was fighting radicalism and rebellion in London. The one heirloom my mother bequeathed me was his sword, and many a day when I played about her knees she told me with pride how her grandfather had been sent with a troop to arrest a notable villain and traitor named Tom Paine, and how he angrily drove the sword into Paine's bed when he found that the ruffian had fled. Paine, secretly warned, did in fact fly from London to France in 1791. In the course of time a roving Scot named Kirk, a dark figure in the family annals, invaded the comfortable farm of the Hills in Lincolnshire and carried off one of the daughters. My friend Charles Goss, curator of the Bishopsgate Institute, once traced him for me as a trader in the Leadenhall Market in London. But his feet itched
again, and he set out, now traveling in a canal boat, for the northwest, and his wife and daughter reached Macclesfield. They were staunch Protestants, but love laughs at creeds and melts their walls.

Children came rapidly, in the ancient way; first still-born twins, then a girl who died in infancy, then four sons and four daughters, who all lived to be over 60. I was the second son, born on St. Martin's Day, November 11, 1867. My mother, still glowing with the zeal of a convert—which, indeed, she never lost—would have one of that revered caste, the priesthood, in the family, and since it was reputed that the surest way to effect this was to put a new-born babe under the patronage of St. Joseph, I became Joseph Martin. What the greater Joseph thinks of me today I do not yet know.

A weaver's wage could not bear the strain, and mother opened a milliner's shop in the main street; and often did she tell me, warmly, how when she was abed with an almost annual new baby my father, after the day at the loom, would bring the hat-making materials to the bedside and under her directions make the hats for her customers. When I was 2 or 3 years old he secured the post of overseer or sub-manager of a small mill in Manchester, 20 miles away, and the molding influence of the city began. It is part of my creed that not only do pre-natal influences normally count for comparatively little in the making of a man but that real education, the fixing of those "sets" or attitudes that give him what we call his character, seriously begins after the age of 16 or so. It is one of the hampering illusions of the race to put such mighty faith in primary and secondary schooling and then set nine children out of ten adrift in a world of chaotic and contradictory messages in which the little of value that they had learned in school is speedily submerged. Yet I am disposed to recognize some lifelong influence of the great northern city in the creation of the order and industry of mind to which I owe such success as I have had.

It seems that the spirit of rebellion also then began. I might, indeed, with a little strain claim that I was born a rebel. Years later, visiting a silk-mill in Macclesfield, I encountered an elderly woman who said that she had been my nurse in my first year, and she affirmed that I was the noisiest brat she had ever known. I rebelled against life, it seems, from the moment my eyes opened upon it. I at all events rebelled at the age of 5. The most distant event stored in what might be called my dim prehistoric memory is of a great flood that covered a large area of the city. The second—though this has doubtless often been refreshed by my mother's talk—is of a day when I was taken to one of those cottage-schools in which some almost illiterate widow used at that time to earn $2 or $3 a week by "teaching." I piped so loudly and incurably that they had to send me home.

Soon afterwards my father moved to an industrial suburb of the city, West Gorton, where the growing brood would have a Catholic school at hand; which brought a deeper influence into my young life. Facing our new house, across the narrow street, were the church and monastery of St. Francis. The church, a handsome Gothic structure designed by the distinguished Catholic architect Pagin, rose, narrowly, high above the squalid clusters of houses and etched itself in my mind. The mysterious monastery, from which the brown-robed Franciscan monks issued to the church, intrigued and for many years, strange as it may seem, faintly repelled me. The time came when I had to take its daily supply of milk from my father's shop but, though often pressed to do so, I would never venture beyond the vestibule. I did not, and do not now, know why. It would be false and absurd to pretend that I had a premonition of the hypocrisy of its profession of austere virtue. The dozen "Fathers" ("They are called Fathers because they often are," I read half a century later in Erasmus), barrel-shaped or gaunt, jovial or stern, were, I learned from my elders, especially my mother, saints in the terrestrial phase. In time, when I became a
monk and priest of their Order, I met them undisguised... But that will
come later. I attended their elementary schools for eight years and
served at their altars with white-hot juvenile zeal.

Let me say at once, shamelessly, because most of my readers will
be old friends of my books and will expect the simple realism I preach,
that I not only headed every class in which I ever sat—in school, college,
and university—thanks to an exceptionally good memory and a love of
study, but I was in my behavior almost a model boy. Indeed when I
first heard the story of Elisha in a Bible lesson I wondered, next time
I knelt in childlike rapture at the altar, whether the roof would not
open and a fiery chariot come for me.

Home influence made me so instinctively truthful, honest, and
well-behaved that I rarely strayed. Just once in a year or so my
buttocks tingled from the thin cane with which my father taught
us, virtue, for he was deadly just; and once the schoolmaster—a tubby,
sterling, fine-natured little Irishman, whom out of earshot we called
"Judy" McCarthy—laid his thicker cane upon the palms of my hands.
One winter's day the ice on a nearby pond had tempted a score of us
to stay, sliding, a half hour after the school opened. The 19 marched
automatically to the punishment spot while I, just as automatically,
went to my seat. To my astonishment the master called me out and
caned me; and it was obviously more painful to him than to me. My
mother had seen me lagging and, Spartan as she was in the cause of
virtue and knowing that I was the master's favorite as well as hers,
she had gone to the school and bullied the poor master until he
promised to punish me.

These were rare ruffles of the tranquil course of my early life.
My home was moderately comfortable, quietly irradiated by the typical
healthy Irishman of the upper working class, my father: industrious
(this perhaps a little beyond the Irish standard), temperate, faithful,
brimming to the lips with good humor and readiness to laugh. He
neither smoked nor swore—just two of his few stories contained one
swear-word each—but liked his beer. A memory of the graver interests
of his father and grandfather remained with him. He took up
photography and had a herbarium; and he sometimes took me to a
museum or a classical concert. But the burden of life was heavy, for
his wage never rose above $10 a week, and his loyal discharge of the
duties he had brought upon himself and the kindliness with which he
eased our paths have enshrined him in my memory. Enshrined too is
the pale thin face, with furrowed brows and brown eyes that reflected
the strain of the life of my mother. Her piety had no sordour, nor
did years of illness and heavy toil and anxiety ever spoil her even temper.
They were never happier than when they saw their children happy
at Christmas or on some other holiday.

We were not "poor" as incomes were then counted; just, perhaps,
on the outer fringe of the working class. Our home was in the best
row of houses in the district, but you rented a six-roomed house in those
days for $2 a week. But the strain of the growing family told, and my
father moved to the little corner shop of the poorer row of houses
behind ours, where my parents eked out the slender weekly wage
by selling a variety of things from beer to bacon and potatoes. By the
age of 12 I took my share in the work, learning to cut bacon and cheese
and butter, going to market in the city to buy a hundred Irish eggs or
to a distant butcher to select a small mound of pork chops on which
we made a meager profit. The work lodged in my memory impressions
that are part of the fuel of my rebellion. Regularly employed and
sober workers, though probably none made more than $7 a week,
working 10 hours a day, bought freely and had accounts. But a nickel
or a dime was the common expenditure, and there was a painful volume
of 2¢ purchases of food. And as I grew older and looked wider over
and deeper into the grim district I even then understood why.

Many a time in later life workers in the Labor movement, hearing
me lecture on science in civic halls to 2,000 or 3,000 folk or applying
ethical principles broadly to social problems, told me how they re-
gretted that I had never been in close contact with the life of the work-
ers. I had for years seen life rawer than most of them ever see it
today. For one of my books, "A Century of Stupendous Progress," I
had to make a minute study of the life of the workers, especially those
of the industrial north of England, in the year 1825. I knew well from
what lower depth these Manchester folk of the 70's of the last century
had risen, though at the time I was too young to dream of a comparison
with either past or future. It was the order of nature, or of God.
The Owenite Socialism of 40 years earlier was as dead as Napoleon. An
Owenite lecturer of that earlier date tells how he had to lecture in my
district of Manchester. He saw a crowd of men streaming in the di-
rection of the hall, and he nervously asked one if they were going to the
lecture. No, the man said in the dialect of our district—"t' t' dog-feight."
In that respect the mass of the workers in the 70's were more leaden
than they had been before 1846.

Reflecting on the ghastly picture I can conjure up, sharply enough,
today, I easily understand it. For the majority life benumbed the mind:
for a large number it was brutalizing. We McCabes were not counted
poor, but eight of us lived in a four-roomed house, and one room
was the shop. Fifty families lived in the remaining dirty brick-boxes
with slate roofs of the row or block. It was back to back, separated
by a narrow passage, with the row of larger houses, and the privy of
each was at the bottom of the small flagged yard—an open muck-heap.
There was, except in the monastary and the house of the Protestant
minister, not a bath or a water closet in a square mile of congested
houses. The stench in summer was appalling, and funerals were as
common as stealthy removals by night or "moonlight flits." Yet all
around us was an acreage of real poverty, sinking in places to a level
at which life was close to that of the brute. I knew boys from these
areas. They were thieves at eight and rapers of girls at 14. I have
known them crowd round in excitement when a man coupled with a sow.

Fighting and copulation were the outstanding pleasures of life,
the only pleasures for which they paid nothing. At 12, usually, the boy
or girl entered a shop or factory, and there was commonly, at the end
of the first day, a ceremony of initiation, for boy or girl, churchgoer or
not, that I need not describe. From that day their ears were drenched
with obscene talk. On Saturday they saw their elders flock to the squalid
public houses, and by evening the streets were enlivened with group-
fights. The men wore thick leather belts, and they usually strung
several heavy brass buckles on them. In their fights they wrapped the
leather round their hands and used the brass-weighted end. Many a
time I saw some drunken grey-headed woman reel out of the fight
with bloody head. Our corner shop was a social observatory from
which, across a waste space or sea of mud after rain, we could not but
see the life of the poorer streets. The one or two police—to tens of thou-
sands of these folk—rarely intervened, but I have seen my father, in
white apron and broad-brimmed white-straw hat, push his way into a
group, though he had neither the physique nor the temper of a
fighter, and drag them apart.

Mechanics Institutes or night schools, at one of which I took
lessons in art with great success, and pioneers of adult education like
Huxley were slowly piercing the shell of this sordid medieval heritage,
but, while many families like ours guarded their homes from the moral
contagion and even sustained a flicker of intellectual life, the condi-
tions were brutalizing for the majority. About that time some artist
painted Queen Victoria pointing to the Bible and saying: "There is the
source of England's greatness." Prints of it sold by the hundred thou-
sand, but the irony of it was sensed by few. What was called England's
greatness at that time was in largest part the world-pretige that her
wealth gave her, and this rested basically upon the industry of some
12,000,000 men, women, and children; and less than half of a century
earlier this industrial army had included millions of married women and millions of children down to the age of 8. Their life, government reports still show, had been appalling. Here is what it still was in the 70's.

Before 6 in the morning the paid "knocker-up" went round the streets and beat on the windows of the bedrooms with a bunch of wire at the top of a long pole. In 10 minutes or so, for they slept in their day shirts (in which the almost universal bugs and lice were rarely disturbed) and did not wash or shave or get even a cup of tea, they roused the street with the clatter of their clogs (heavy shoes with iron-shod wooden soles, which all wore). The trickles of men and girls, their breakfasts and dinners (bread and cheese or a little bacon or meat—there was no interval for tea) carried in knotted large red or other colored and grimy handkerchiefs, blended in the Lane, our chief street, and a grim procession, looking, on the bleak winter mornings, like a march of the damned, thundered its way to the mills, a mile or two away, to make the fortunes of the great cotton-spinners and merchants and to build up England's greatness. The older folk told them how they had once worked 14 to 15 hours a day. Now Parliament had, after a fierce fight, for it was un-English to interfere with Free Enterprise, given them a 10 hour day. They reached home after those 10 strenuous hours in a fetid atmosphere, and no man then knew or cared to know how many calories to eat, about 6 or 7 in the evening.

What concern for our "spiritual realities" would you expect? After paying for what food they could on Saturdays and for indispensable clothes and shoes they drank what remained of the wage. On Monday morning the wife pawned the Sunday clothes of the family, but there was nothing to do with the money except buy more beer and food. Not one adult in four could read, and the fourth had as a rule little inclination. Few of them ever went five miles from their ant-hill. The only shows were a tawdry circus that pitched its tent on our waste ground once a year and a still more tawdry and entirely vicious 4c theater, "Simpson's Slang," that brightened the district every few months with its naphtha lamps and lewd jokes. The "respectable," like my father, took their children (walking, for cents had to be counted) occasionally to the city museum, three miles away, and once a year to the pantomime at the city theater or to the Zoological Garden. Once, by skilful strategy, my father got three cheap tickets for the railway men's annual excursion to the sea. I was 12, my brother 14, and we walked two miles at 5 in the morning and took nearly three hours to travel 40 miles in coaches with wooden seats... But we saw the sea, and hardly one man or boy in several hundred of those who lived and spawned round us ever saw it. Drink, fighting (as participants or spectators), and sex were the pleasures of life. We boys had our cheap games and rambles into the country.

At 13 I took my place in the industrial army. The eight years of school were over. I was equipped—better in some respects than primary-school pupils are today, as their curriculum is over-loaded—for the work of life with a command of the three R's. One other boy and I had survived into what was called the Seventh Standard, which added a little algebra and geometry to the common fund, and we passed brilliantly. The inspectors left us in a corner, and my comrade spread Euclid on his knees below the desk and copied out the problems—and I copied what he wrote. So we set out on our business careers—Bill became a blacksmith—with full honors, and my parents had no longer to pay 12c a week—it had begun at 2c—for my education. I was to earn $1 a week as an office-boy, and my pocket money was raised from 2c to 8c a week.

Some would ask what the specifically Catholic atmosphere of the school counted for in my education. Nothing. Most of the boys came from poor Irish homes, where the father earned from $3 to $5 a week, and they brought their "buggers" as well as their bugs with them. Under the plous statues and pictures that adorned the walls or on the
playground the older boys instructed the younger, when the teacher was engaged elsewhere, in the facts of life. Even today the British cities in which Catholic schools are most numerous, and the most Catholic countries of Europe— Ireland, Portugal, and pre-war Poland—have the worst criminal and sex statistics. These are published officially, but not one of the moralists, sociologists or politicians who are so eloquent about the need of religion in the school ever glances at them.

Now at 7:30 every morning, winter (which is raw in Manchester) and summer, I walked to the great city. Train-fare would be a nickel a day, and we could not afford it. My mother’s eyes brightened when I proudly brought home my first dollar. Somewhere about that time she received a letter from America enclosing $35, the man explaining that he had cheated her of that in our little shop. She fainted. Four of us were at work, and my eldest sister was a schoolma’am. But there were still three youngsters, and quarters were carefully counted. How we slept in two bedrooms, occasionally squeezing in an aunt and uncle and their two children, is obscure in my memory. But the stork had brought his last gift, the income slowly rose, our comforts gradually increased. From errand-boy in one of those huge Manchester merchant-houses I became a clerk and made good progress. The boys and men came from areas which were at least superior to West Gorton—the few girls cheerfully acknowledged that they were street-walkers at night and sex rang in my young ears as persistently as ever—but my eye kindled with ambition. Daily I saw the merchant-prince old John Rylands, chief proprietor of the enterprise and a millionaire. I would . . . And here the line snapped. The first and mildest revolution in my life occurred. I resigned and went back to the Gorton monastery to begin preparatory studies for the priesthood.

2. IN THE SHADE OF THE CLOISTER

More than once during the last year or two the monks had plainly hinted that they would like me to join them. I had good character and, which was more important, I was considered the brightest pupil in their schools. Whenever some more important cleric or some rich lay patron visited the school I was put before the master’s throne to sing “Save the Boy” or recite “The Cataract of Lodore” (a feat of memory, this, to which the school always listened open-mouthed). For two or three years I ignored all these suggestions and some that came presently from the Jesuits of the next district. My reason lies back in a misty patch of memory but I can faintly discern that, in a boyish way, I decided rather that when the time came I would marry and found a family. I fell deeply in love every year to the age of 15. But let me anticipate a little and tell the reader that, from poor health and hard study, my sexual maturity was delayed, in spite of my sultry surroundings, until the age of 24. Not that I was a sickly book-worm. I led in the cheap sports that we had, such as robbing the monastery garden of carrots and gooseberries. Only when the sport turned to such things as hunting stray cats or taking liberties with the school-girls did I evade the leadership. But often for weeks at a stretch I had to close my books and be sent off to breathe my native air.

When I was in my 14th year my father, whose piety was not so deep and docile as that of my mother, had an acrid quarrel with the clergy, and he at once packed his household goods and took them and us to a different part of Manchester, where we fell under the spiritual care of the Jesuits. I was never on the same familiar terms with any of these as I had been with the friars, though I served at their altar. A score of bonds held me to my old home and, perversely, I began now to be less repelled by their approaches. I had been the star boy-actor in the amateur parish dramatics, and they sent for me to take a difficult part in a play of Newman’s. In short, to my mother’s joy and with my father’s
less confident consent, I agreed. I had no “vocation” to join the army of the Lord’s servants, as they knew. They recruit their body by persuading boys that the career of a priest is one of such prestige as they would never normally attain: and, in my abnormal or retarded sexual condition the price was one that I could not then appreciate.

At the age of 16 I quit the wicked city and began to learn Latin in the preparatory college at the Gorton monastery, living at home and walking a mile or two every morning and evening. One other local boy, who later left the Order and became political boss of a suburb of New York which he would not care for me to name, and half a dozen raw Irish boys, sons of farmers who could pay the fee, made up the class. In realistic English what is called in Catholic literature the vocation to the priesthood means that either the boy must be intelligent and fairly behaved or his parents must be willing to pay $100 a year for a year or two. Since I did not live in the monastery I paid nothing, and some Catholic writers have reproached me with using the “grand education” the Church gave me—some picturesquely say that it picked me “out of the gutter”—for the purpose of criticizing it. The one year of education in this college of “humane letters” was paltry. From a simple-minded and kindly young monk of mediocre ability we learned just enough of the elements of French and Greek—I found that he himself had never studied Greek and he learned his page the day before he gave it in class—for each pupil to forget them as soon as he passed on. Since Latin was the language of all church documents, ritual and domestic, this was our chief subject, but it was a nerveless medieval Latin. Few priests can read even Cicero. I worked so hard privately, at home, that by the end of the year I had read all Cicero’s speeches and most of Vergil.

After that came the 12 months of trial, or the novitiate. This the authorities of the Order, who had hitherto had all their British recruits trained in Belgium, had established at Killarney, in Ireland. I still had no qualms until the week’s holiday on the lakes was over and, dressed as monklings in the brown robe with knotted cord, sandalled feet, and shaven crowns, we were “enclosed” in the blue-limestone friary for a year. A younger brother of the Irish statesman John Dillon here joined us, though like all who joined after the age of 20, he later quit the Order.

Then began the grim round of prayers and holy exercises, with all lesson books and profane literature locked away. We had “left the world,” even abandoning our names—I was now Brother Antony—and of this we had hourly reminders. From 6 in the morning we were, at intervals, droning out or chanting the psalms and lessons. We ate in silence while the Bible and holy books were read to us in Latin and English. We drank our coffee or tea, though many preferred beer at tea-time, from basins, not like the worldly folk who had cups and saucers. Our bedrooms (or cells) were Spartan in their simplicity... But the calendar was relieved every few weeks by gorgeous feasts, and at Christmas it took us more than a week to clear the larders of the geese and turkeys, the cakes and puddings, which the Irish folk showered upon the holy friars. Many other nights, which were not saints’ days, I heard, as I lay awake, the faint sound in the distant priests’ quarters of song that somehow recalled the alcoholic noises of a Saturday night in Gorton. And why were we locked away every night behind a stout grille? Why so strictly forbidden not only ever to enter a brother’s cell but even to lay a hand on him?

There was a grave conclave of the authorities on the question whether I should be dismissed. In the garden one day our special tutor found a few blades of grass on one of my comrades. I had playfully sprinkled them on him but he foolishly declined, and I out of pride refused, to give the explanation. There was another conclave later when my health broke down. The rich food brought on a dyspepsia that lasted 30 years. A minor crisis occurred when I was caught one day
reading a Greek grammar. How would my career have run if they had discharged me? One of them whom I met years later told me that I ought to have been recognized from the first as “a born anarchist,” and they deeply deplored that consideration of my ability had held their hands.

So the weary year dragged out its length. One month I would sit, ill, in the garden moodily contemplating the melancholy blue Kerry hills beyond the lakes. Next month I would rally and face the holy treadmill. And gradually there emerged from the grey waters of my thoughts the fundamental doubt that was to haunt me for the next 10 years and in the end lead me to sanity and freedom. This unnatural life—pray remember that it did not then or for many years afterwards involve any sexual sacrifice for me—was part of a sacred commercial agreement, a contract with the Lord. It was a logical response to the Master’s urge, to “leave all things” and you would receive “a hundredfold reward in heaven.” So I would be sure of the other term of the contract. I might whimsically plead that the atmosphere of a great city and my little experience of its marts have given me this business conception of the religious life, but the truth is that from the time my mind unfolded it was ruthlessly logical. This green Irish earth about me, the cities way back in England, the warm home were real. Was the promised reward for sacrificing it all just as real? Faintly I traced the chief task of my thought-life for the next 10 years: prove the existence of God, the reality of immortality, the genuineness of the story of Jesus, the soundness of the Church’s social claims.

Dutifully I told my doubts in confession, and the priest who had special charge of us, a kindly youngish man—though, as I learned later, under the cloud of an amorous adventure, so exiled to Ireland—who scarcely knew that such questions existed and would, if they occurred to his own mind, wash them away with a draught of Irish wine as whispers of the devil, used on me what we called in the later rhetoric class “the Blush Argument.” How dare I, an ignorant boy, doubt what such legions of great men believed! He recommended the works of Cardinal Newman: the apologist whose maxim was, “Not by logic hath it pleased God to save his people.” It was like giving port wine to a patient with fever. But I was captivated by Newman’s style and read all his works to fix the pattern of it in my mind . . . Years later I was dining one night at George Moore’s with the French novelist Edouard Dujardin and, the talk falling upon Newman, I confessed my literary hero-worship. Moore, whose blood-pressure rose whenever he heard this literary praise of Newman, jumped up from the table with his customary bluntness and fetched his copy of the “Apologia,” with a marked page. “Read that,” he said truculently, “and tell Dujardin how many mistakes there are in that one page.” I read it through. “Eleven,” I confessed. “Thirteen,” Moore snorted.

The spasm of doubt passed—it was to be a recurrent fever—and it was in complete sincerity that at the end of the year I knelt with the others before the altar and took the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, while the ladies of Killarney shed tears. It never occurred to a Catholic woman to see that this encouragement of boys and girls to adjure life while they have still hardly a dim perception of its promises is the practice of human sacrifice in the interest of the Church. It is worse in the case of girls of 16 or 17 who are persuaded to take the veil. The priest finds his consolations. Once in later years, when I heard confessions in a convent, a young nun in her early 20’s, kneeling at my side—not in a confessional “box”—confessed her peccadilloes, which you could write on a cigarette paper, and then said poignantly: “Father, I do want someone to love me.” I had to murmur platitudes about the love of Jesus. To be sure, these vows of monklings and nunlings are only “simple” or provisional. On appeal the Pope can cancel them. But what Catholic boy or girl would ask his parents to approach the far-distant throne or, if they should do so, would go back to them
and their parish as one who had failed in, if not resisted, his or her vocation?

I was 17 when I reached the college in a suburb of London where the specific studies for the priesthood began. The deep impression of a morbid social order that the first phase of my life had given me was overlaid by these new and disquieting experiences, and my education, apart from a fair knowledge of Latin, had not yet begun. The faint traces of French and Greek nouns and verbs were nearly obliterated, and I could not even speak tolerable English. The head of the new college called upon each of us to read a paragraph from a book. He frowned at my Lancashire accent, and when I got to "us" and pronounced it "ooz" he visibly shuddered. "Oh," I corrected, "us." I got my father to send me a pronouncing dictionary and polished my tongue; though, always a rebel, I refused to go the full length of the southern drawl in such words as "glarss" and "parss." For the first, if not only time, in my life I compromised.

There is no need here to go into detail about the next 10 years. I have described the life fully in my "Twelve Years in a Monastery," which has had more than 100,000 readers. An amphibious friend who lived with equal comfort in Catholic and Rationalist circles, each not knowing that he moved in the other, told me that at a Catholic dinner the talk fell upon this book. The cardinal-archbishop, near whom he sat, said: "It's all true, you know, but a malicious selection of the worst... How is it that we lose so many brilliant men?" I smile when I look back over its pages. The keynote was, as I will tell, given me by (Sir) Leslie Stephen: "Good-humored contempt." But I had little humor at the time and an adolescent style.

I set my teeth in spite of the chronic dyspepsia I now had—I fainted scores of times—and began the long program of study. The real head of the college part of the monastery, one of the ablest and most learned priests in London, extended to me from the start a partnership that became as intimate as the discrepancy of age permitted. As a result our teachers became known in the fraternity as The Removables. Using my influence with him I got four of them removed for incompetence. For the first year we had rhetoric, and after a time I got the teacher, a dark, dubious, not unintelligent friar, deposed. Some years later he came back as head of the monastery in which I taught, but he was liberal enough to bear no malice: so liberal, in fact, that he twice departed with the contents of the treasury, had a comfortable month or two in Brussels, and, finding that he could not earn his living, returned to the monastic jail and became a popular preacher. He died a few years ago in the usual odor of synthetic sanctity.

The year was almost wasted, except that I perfected my knowledge of Latin and advanced in French (mainly by private work), and we passed on to the study of philosophy. It was a sort of primer of Thomas Aquinas, as little related to what Bertrand Russell calls philosophy as a primary school text-book of mathematics is to a work on Relativity. Yet our professor, an eccentric, red-faced, sloppy-limbed (from rheumatism) Belgian friar knew little more about it than we did. He promptly lost his chair. Years later, when I occupied that chair, I intercepted a love-letter he wrote to one of my pupils, and I got him transferred to the north, where his ardor might cool.

My learned friar-friend then took up "dogmatic theology," but I had two more scalps in my student days. As professor of "moral theology" (casuistry) he chose a more refined British friar who had been at public school (college) before he entered the Order. At least there were still traces of his earlier refinement in his kindly gentle speech, but he was one of the tragic wrecks of the system. Clearly he believed in it no longer, but the only alternative for him, if he quit, was the career of the hobo. He found consolation in beer, which he would even steal. He soon ceased to teach us the theology of virtue, and he died, of dropsy, in early middle age. My fourth victim was a
younger brother of my learned mentor, and the approach was difficult. But, a burly eunuch young Irishman of considerable wasted ability, he was mildly insane from sex-repression—I learned later that in his visits to ladies of the parish he asked such questions as how many times a week they had relations with their husbands—and, in spite of his threats, I reported him.

These were just the few friar-priests in the little community with whom I came into contact. Others were at that time only enigmatic faces to me, for we students were still segregated, and for reasons which I was still constitutionally unable to imagine; though heaven knows there was not much of my ignorance left after I had emerged from the long and picturesque sexual section of our moral theology. We were training to hear confessions, and the theory was that the Lord insisted that when a man or a girl confessed a sin there was to be no vagueness about it. The priest must not absolve until he knew the precise degree of guilt, the physiological category, the local color, of the offense. But I will return later to the question of confession and the general level of character.

I have still the five Latin volumes of theology (3,432 quarto pages of closely printed matter) which we studied in three years. In the end I was sent to the archbishop's house for examination and the examiner, an elderly Belgian canon, stared at me when I asked him to conduct the examination in Latin. I spoke it more fluently than he did, and it seemed more fitted to the subject. This, and a course of the weird fiction which in Catholic seminaries is called ecclesiastical history, completed the grand education which they gave me. I taught myself, By some freak chance our musty and almost entirely sacred library contained a few old volumes of a cheap encyclopedia, and I read the scientific articles eagerly and admired the wonders that science had achieved—30 years earlier. My Gorton diction gave way to one so stately that the professor, with mild rebuke, bade us one day write an essay on the use of big words. He looked sadly at me when I handed him a few pages with the title "On the Employment of a Sesquipedalian Vocabulary." I fancy there were about four words to the line in the essay. But I was safely insolent. Somehow—I often wonder now what sort of a young prig I was in those days—even the head man muttered a suggestion or correction to me, if it were ever really necessary, almost in a tone of apology. I had, and have, no inclination to strut or boast. It was just a fact of life.

Through it all my malady, aggravated by the heavy food and the unhealthy life, persisted, and the clouds of doubt now rolled more frequently upon my mind and seemed to grow denser. I do not remember that I suffered acutely, but a few years after I had quit the Church I put my experiences, while they were still fresh, in a novel ("In the Shade of the Cloister," by "Arnold Wright") which that outstanding critic, Sir Clement Shorter, described in his review as "brilliant." This surprised me, but I am even more surprised today to read how somber life became and how the daily round of, one might say, mechanical prayer from 6 in the morning chafed my raw nerves. By this time I had begun to see the hypocrisy of the life, the fraudulent claim of superior virtue, the—to use clerical language—soulless routine of church life. But I was bound to it by "solemn" vows from the age of 19. Even the Pope could not relieve me of these oaths to the Lord; unless, as a few cases in papal history show, I became heir to great wealth or power. Papal interpretation of the Lord's will always coincided with the material interests of the Church.

But I had no mind to leave, and my learned father-confessor, to whom I spoke freely of the matter, never suggested that I should even postpone my advancement toward the priesthood. The right evidence for me, I felt, was somewhere round the corner, and I avidly read all relevant literature that I could obtain. When I became a priest my guide initiated me to the sort of secret society of Modernists among the
clergy. He was a friend of the famous French priest-scholar Duchesne and would often quote that historian's saying that there were those who would pull down the old ivy-grown fabric of the Church but wise men would be content to remove the ivy. But it was just the ivy by which the Church held the allegiance of its uneducated millions; and I was in any case never interested in dogma or sectarian controversy. Protestant writers who say that it was unfortunate that I knew only one Church and discarded it hastily for Atheism are entirely wrong. From the first my doubts hovered about the fundamental religious statements.

And this search for the solution of my doubts caused me to find a lead for the rest of my life. I soon broke through the brittle shell of what in the Catholic Church we called philosophy: a structure of medi-

eval verbiage the foundations of which Kant had destroyed a century earlier and which provoked only the smiles of modern philosophers until, in our day, the wealth and political power the Church has at-
tained intimidated professors and publicists and forced them to greet such a man as Maritain as a thinker. I found the larger philosophies not less barren for my search, and I increasingly explored the fields of modern science and history; and, as I will tell presently, the death of God in my mind compelled me to formulate a new creed of life, individual and collective, and pay equal attention to contemporary literature, sociology, politics, and economics, to read many languages and visit many lands.

At the time it was to be remarked only that I took an unusual in-

terest in philosophy, and as soon as I was ordained priest, at the age of 23, I was appointed "professor of philosophy," the title in our rules. Why I went on to the priesthood I have explained. My skeptical fever was intermittent, and it disappeared in times of extraordinary religious emotion, such as the special preparation for some "holy order." At the time of my ordination my mind was as clear as a flockless sky. There happened to be at the time in London an authority of our Order from Rome, and he wanted to take me to Rome to study in the Francis-
can international school or university at Araceli. Had I gone there ... Over the portals of these Roman universities they might inscribe "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." They are laboratories for in-
oculating the cleverer priests from all lands with the true indiscutable papal virus.

But my learned patron, who had influence in Rome, would not part with me. He had no other friar under his charge who even knew definitely what the word philosophy meant. So I gravely mounted the rostrum and, as our rules enjoined, dilated for an hour in Latin on the meaning and aim of philosophy. In the course of the day I found that the pupils had not understood a word, such was their training even in Latin. I was compelled to give the classes in English, from a Latin text book, and I soon found that learning philosophy meant only mem-
orizing formulae.

This Catholic or "scholastic" philosophy was not only a system that must not promote thinking but it had an unsound lineage. It was ultimately based upon the metaphysics of Aristotle, and Aristotle had rendered the world an ill service when he deserted the Ionian line of research and founded metaphysics. The Arabs when they took up the heritage of the Greeks and found his works in the monasteries of Greek heretics, realized that they must remain in Aristotle's world of compromise and verbiage while so many Muslim fanatics watched them, and it was from translations of the Arab works that the medieval schoolmen learned philosophy; and they further twisted and strained its formulae to make them support Christian theology. The reader may wonder how I spent four years in that galley, but the scheme was in some ways capable of expansion. It began with logic and passed on to "ontology" or metaphysics proper. But the three remaining sections were cosmology, psychology, and ethics; and here I could discreetly
borrow from science to put flesh on the dry bones. It was a dangerous enterprise and was slowly spelling out my clerical doom; and my faith might have collapsed earlier but for a year's suspension of my studies.

Owing to some reorganization I had no students for a year, and my superior sent me to our friary at Louvain (Belgium) to learn Hebrew and Syriac at Louvain University. I attended also the course of philosophy under Msgr. (later Cardinal) Mercier, who suspecting the grossness of life amongst the ignorant friars, invited me to live at his house and was kind and friendly. Before I returned to England he offered me a Ph.D. over the tea-table, but I had to explain that the rules of my Order forbade us “humble friars” to accept. He was, like my London confirere, an advanced Modernist, but he disarmed and was made a cardinal when Rome started its truculent campaign against Modernism. Hebrew, of which I had a fine first year course under Van Hoonacker, and the Syriac, the supposed teaching of which by Lamy was a senile comedy, were never of the least use to me. The lessons in Syriac were indeed such—they were just rambling talks on everything except Syriac—that after one a week for six months Lamy demanded that each of us (or all of us) should bring a translation of the Syriac text of 20 lines of Genesis next week. By careful comparison of the Hebrew text I wrote it out, and my fellow-students tore it up. They could not translate a line. I carried my Greek, which was never good, a step further, perfected my French, and learned German with the friendly aid of German students.

As to the horrors of the friary—the lavatory and toilet arrangements reminded me of the slums of Manchester, though the friars had plenty of money—and the miserable hypocrisy, the sordid mixture of ascetic professions and greedy, greasy practices . . . See my “Twelve Years in a Monastery.” It was, as far as that was concerned, with profound relief that I found myself recalled at the end of a year to London to resume my classes—and my private search for God. No man had ever more of the will-to-believe or prayed more passionately for light. The search nearly came to a premature end soon afterwards. After lecturing on astronomy to a parochial gathering of 1,000 or so and imprudently talking afterwards in the icy air I contracted pleurisy, and the moment came when through filmy eyes I saw all the friars kneeling by my bed in prayer for the dying . . . In a month or two I was again seeking God and showing raw Irish pupils how to prove his existence ineluctably by means of the arguments of Aquinas.

The dull ache of life grew worse. The clouds of doubt became dark and permanent. The hypocrisy of the life in which I was ensnared was no longer mere suspicion. Only one man in a dozen priests was what the expert would call deeply religious. Most of them were just men who would probably have made honest traders but the life in some degree or other demoralized them. I rubbed shoulders now with friars whom I had known in my boyhood at Manchester, and the mask of saintliness soon fell away. One friar I had known, a dark gaunt man, had sent so many girls to become nuns in a strict convent at York that his confessional was frivolously called “the booking office.” He had been transferred to London, and his superior told me that he was so pitiful a dipsomaniac that if you put a glass of whiskey before him and threatened to shoot him if he touched it he would snatch it up. He called at certain Catholic homes every day while the husband was at business, demanding whiskey, perhaps more. Other friars had what were amongst ourselves notorious liaisons. In the end I found that my learned mentor had a suspicious tenderness for a sensual girl of 17 who boasted to me, with a smirk, of their “friendship.”

Since I was a professor I was excused from this arduous duty of taking teas with ladies in the afternoons which is the chief escape of the friar-priests from the dreariness of the life. It troubled me little. My sexual development came on at the age of 24, but my health was poor; and as long as I believed in the ideal of the life I was faithful to it. But I had to help in hearing confessions, and the work was so tiresome
and morbid that it was the first priestly duty I began to evade. I have a full chapter on it in my "Twelve Years" and must here dismiss it summarily.

The more lurid accounts or suspicions of the confessional are fiction. Priest and penitent are so separated in the "box" in the church that no contact is possible. There is, however, no absolute prohibition of hearing the confessions of women elsewhere, and the amorous priest would not observe it if there were. I have known one of these induce young married women to feign illness and take to their beds. But the priest has such opportunities for adventure in his visits to the homes or in his own home that the confessional plays a small part in the romance of clerical life. Doubtless it is used for assignations. In large numbers of cases it demoralizes, even debauches, girls and young women. In it they are, they understand, licensed to talk intimately about their sex feelings to a man. For the great majority of Catholics it is a mechanical routine, an unwelcome obligation, and it is only in a small minority of cases—generally of refined women—that it may be the moral aid which non-Catholic admirers of the Church affect to find in it. Broadly it is just part of the Church's technique to make the laity inferior and docile to the clergy.

Of the character of the priests themselves one can say only what commonsense would expect in such circumstances. One of their most common pleas is that without religion there can be no character. This is not merely a controversial device. It is in large measure a reflection of their condition. The man who normally loses the religious basis of his code of conduct easily finds that it has a sound social basis in the life which he shares. But the priest who becomes skeptical yet remains in his position—and few have the least hope of securing a life of equal comfort in any other way—has no social pressure or direction. He concentrates on the 11th Commandment, Thou shalt not be found out. One might call "No Scandal" the supreme commandment of the Church to the clergy in non-Catholic countries; and even in Latin countries today the growth of Communism and Socialism, which they naturally hate, turns an innocent love-affair or a rich table into a scandal.

I have repeatedly discussed the matter with other ex-priests and we were agreed that the great majority of priests are skeptical in some degree or shade and that large numbers of them are entirely skeptical as regards religion. The level of conduct corresponds.

Few are deeply religious and free from hypocrisy. A large proportion are completely unscrupulous and amorous. Not that a priest has to be skeptical to indulge in love-affairs. I have in various works given ample evidence of the conduct of priests in Italy, Spain, France, and Latin America. It is a large subject and one in which precision is impossible. Let it suffice that in the kind of conduct that matters it is ludicrous to represent the clergy as superior to the laity, and that probably the majority of them in America and Britain are occasionally or habitually immoral in the narrower sense. I still think that nuns, who in any case have little opportunity, are rarely unchaste. Several ex-nuns have confirmed me in this while admitting that the unnatural life leads to an intolerable amount of quarrelling and unhealthy feeling; while doctors who have served convents have told me that masturbation is a common evil in them.

In the summer of 1895 I was offered, and I accepted, charge of a small college that the friars had built in the country (Buckingham) to give recruits of 13 to 15 the preliminary studies, chiefly Latin. I was now the Very Reverend Professor Father Antony, according to our statutes, at the age of 27, and before me . But I smiled. I had taken the quiet rural position because the time had come when I must wrestle with my soul. For months I was immersed in framing a more or less modern curriculum and was, with one young and ill-educated assistant and all the cares of a college of slenderest revenue, teaching it to a dozen pupils, several of whom had the brains of their Irish cattle.
I was not allowed to reject them—*their* parents paid. At the Christmas vacation I shut myself in my cell and faced my destiny. I was already watched. I had a telescope, a microscope, a collection of modern books. I took a sheet of paper and—was it the Manchester influence?—divided it into debit and credit columns on the arguments for God and immortality. On Christmas Eve I wrote "Bankrupt" at the foot.

It seemed to me that I had the right to linger on a little, preparing for the new life, allowing a margin for an improbable return of faith; and it was in misery that I got through—closely watched—such ceremonies as were inevitable. On the night of February 18th my mentor, Father David, walked in from London. He drank my whiskey as genially as ever, but I knew. The one Catholic lady I had taken into my confidence had betrayed me.

Smilingly I watched him next morning—it was Ash Wednesday—go out, for I knew that he was going to close the bank account; and I still smiled when he came back with a new face. "On information received" the grand council deposed me and ordered me to repair to a monastery, a virtual prison, in the heart of the country. I shed the brown robe and sandals, put on the black clerical suit, and packed my civvies and my books. Non-Catholic friends I had made had urged me to do this. I had not myself conceived that the friars would stoop to the level they did, but Father David had become in a day my bitterest enemy. He offered me at parting the usual brotherly kiss, but I refused the Judas gesture. When he asked, nervously, if I was going to the secluded friary I shook off the prudence recommended to me and told him to mind his own business. Too excited to appreciate the magnitude of my first rebellion and revolution, I walked out with my eyes on the sun of a new world. My "friend," I soon found, walked out to the police-station and heavily charged me with theft from the college. The Church must be protected whatever hearts and lives are broken.

3. STEPPING OUT

For some time I had taken part in a cheerful Sunday evening meeting in the doctor's house. The banker, solicitor, curate, and a few leading businessmen formed the circle. None knew until the end of January that I was not a conventional orthodox priest. I then told one or two, and they surprised me by first urging me to stay where I was, with all my skepticism, but it happened that just about the middle of February one of them had to dismiss his junior cashier and he offered me the modest job as a temporary means of support. So from the monastery I went to my friend's house, changed to civvies, and trusted to hear no more of the miserable world from which I had escaped.

I was awakened at 7 in the morning by a nervous postmaster who said that by a trick a representative of the monastery had secured my letters and had threatened that they would "soon silence me." At 9 Father David, handing in a letter of introduction in which he put M.A. after his name—it meant Missionary Apostolic, he later explained—called upon my friend and represented me as a dishonest youth, in temporary charge of the college, whom they had had to discharge. He went away with burning ears, but in the afternoon he came back with a police-sergeant to claim the "stolen goods." For the sake of peace I let him have some of the books, though the thick-skulled sergeant, who (I later learned) committed a serious legal offense in letting them bring him, was hopelessly bewildered about ownership. Twenty years later a Catholic attorney introduced this point in the course of a lawsuit in which a monastic body impudently claimed property and I was called as an expert witness. The estimable judge was just as puzzled as the rural sergeant by the "vow of poverty" and the claim of ownership—he made contemptuous remarks on the abbot at the close—and when he asked me who *does* own the books and other property in a monastery
I was able to reply: "My Lord, nobody knows—our theologians agree only that the monks do not." His expression implied that we seemed to have dropped back from the Central Law Court of modern London to the Middle Ages.

It was the beginning of the venomous and unprincipled persecution I was to endure for the next half-century. All my Catholic friends, except my parents, who nobly defended my honor, melted like snowflakes, and soon they believed the scurrilous stories the priests put into circulation about me. Not only had I robbed the monastery but I had left solely to drink and continue my amours more freely. "Punch and Judy," the Irish priests smirked, with all their greasy vulgarity. Twenty years later a Scottish schoolmistress wrote me that a high Catholic dignitary told her that I had compromised a nun and had had to leave to marry her. Ten years earlier men had written me that Catholic barbers had whispered this story into their ears. They all knew, or could quite easily ascertain, that I did not marry until nearly three years after leaving the Church, and I then married a young lady of whose existence I had been unaware until 18 months after leaving. As time went on and I won some public prestige the tactics changed. An ex-member of the inner circle at Catholic headquarters told me that every effort was to be made to ruin me, and for years no London paper has reviewed any books of mine or published any letter I wrote it. More than once Catholics have threatened my life, and I have learned of the meanest tricks to hamper my work as a writer and lecturer.

Yet it is sheer nonsense to say, as some do, that this bitter hostility explains why I have written and lectured so much on the Church. Smilingly I acknowledge that I have given as much as I have taken, though I have never fought with unclean weapons or stooped to mean or dishonest devices. Over the mantel in my study hang two symbolic ornaments: an oriental pipe and an oriental dagger (which is not poisoned). Any man who wants a literary duel with me may choose the weapon; but I prefer the pipe. It is true that in Britain, where the law of libel is a law and at least the law courts are impervious to Catholic influence, they never ventured to put in print one word of their magpie chatter reflecting on my character. A few years ago a correspondent sent me a booklet ("I Can Read Anything") in which an American Jesuit, Fr. D. A. Lord, explains to Catholics how wise and kindly is the order of the Church that they must not (under pain of hell) read my criticisms of it. One passage ran:

"Has it occurred to you that when you read books of this sort, you pit your minds, as yet not fully matured or trained, against the trained, clever, brilliant minds of men skilled in their lines and adept in their methods? And when they are utterly unscrupulous, as, let's say, Joseph McCabe is, and will twist any bit of history to make a case, pile yarn on yarn to construct a proof, and use fable for fact and supposition for solid argument, what chance has the average reader against them? He is fighting unfairly against men who fight fairly, and we wisely decline to meet an unfair fighter."

Ah, I reflected, at last they break into print, and the law shall decide. But on looking again at the imprint I found that the booklet had been published by The Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, and, as Catholic Irish ladies who have several times come to consult me about the frauds of their priests and nuns have told me, you have no more chance of finding a solicitor who will accept a case against the Church in de Valera's Eire than you have in Vatican City. The British Catholic Truth Society did not publish the booklet; but I found that it quietly gave inquirers about me the address of the Dublin publisher.

Since I must have written more than 50 substantial works on the Roman Church one would think that Jesuit writers who found me so recklessly unscrupulous would have in my works a magnificent field for their well-known zeal to expose "lies about the Church": and the excuse that they are too dignified to engage with a man who fights unfairly is
amusing. More plausible is the assurance that Mr. Poynter, who was for years in the inner councils of the Westminster Catholic Federation (the British equivalent of Catholic Welfare), once gave me that it was a standing order to propagandists that it was safer to avoid all reference to my works. In America, I believe, some misguided or ambitious priest once wrote a serious book—I did not trouble to get a copy of it—on "The Philosophy of Joseph McCabe"; whereupon the Jesuit organ, which I did see, stamped on the poor worm for taking so seriously "a man with the brain of a peasant." The only attempt at an express reply that I have ever seen is a tortuous and evasive booklet by the Jesuit Keating written and published by the Catholic Truth Society 37 years ago! Once, a correspondent told me, a Catholic preacher explained that "as an historian McCabe is completely discredited." On challenge afterwards he said that in my "Haeckel's Critics Answered," which had been published 27 years earlier, I had, casually, given the wrong name of a French preacher.

The reader will expect at least a few pages on my attitude to the Roman Church, but I will be brief. It is, in the first place, an entirely wrong idea that it has occupied the chief place in my mind and work. Of my books only one in four or five is concerned with it, while of my thousands of lectures in nearly all parts of the British Empire and America, I should say that 10 times as many were on science alone as on Rome. Simply, the one subject on which I was an expert when I quit the Church was the Church, and folk wanted to know why I had quit it; or, as a dour Scot said at one meeting, "what the devil he was doing in the galley at all?" When I wrote my "Twelve Years in a Monastery" and it had at once a large circulation, the demand increased, and even Sir Walter Besant, with whom I was then friendly, urged me to continue on that theme. I did not feel the holy spirit of a crusader, and the demand rather surprised me. A little society in Manchester asked for the lecture "Why I Left the Church of Rome," and a surprising number of the citizens came to hear. Incidentally—and to my annoyance—they advertised me with large posters that had my name and "Ex-Priest" in enormous letters, though I never pandered to those who were eager for spicy tales. I learned later that my eldest sister, a devout Catholic schoolmistress with whom I was afterwards cordially reconciled, spent a whole night on the streets tearing down such bills as she could reach. When I asked my brother what my father had said he replied, reflectively: "Well, you see, the old man had never seen the family name that size before." George Moore told me that was worth a book.

In the monastic college I had taught "ecclesiastical history" as well as philosophy. I opened my serious literary career with biographical studies ("Peter Abelard" and "St. Augustine and His Age"). They were reviewed (by Leonard Courtney, Leslie Stephen told me) in editorial articles of the Daily Telegraph, one of London's higher-class dailies, and were for years on the reading list in the historical school of a number of American universities, and this led me to take up history as my principal line of study. I now saw the monstrous falsity of the Catholic version and began to write the true version. I was already painfully aware how hypocritical the priests were. I saw this now, not merely as a morbid effect of an unnatural life, but as part of a vast scheme for duping the Catholic laity, and indeed the world. From the earlier pre-monastic stretch of my life I had an abiding sentiment of pity that in the 6th millennium of civilization the mass of the people should live as they did, and I now saw that the Church had, instead of creating or promoting European civilization, as it boasted, retarded it for 1,000 years and had, for the protection of its own wealth and power, taken sides always with the enemies and exploiters of the people.

I had been taught to tell folk not to judge the Church by its life in Protestant countries. I now traveled and found that non-Catholic atmosphere really gave it some decency to which it was cynically in-
different in Catholic countries. In time I became a citizen of the world, closely watching the pageant of life—social, political, and economic—and I found Rome as unscrupulously, though now less openly, putting its wealth and power as high above the interests of the race as it did in the age of Gregory VII or Innocent III. I saw the clerical or professionally Catholic body, from the Pope to the local journalists, as forming the richest, most powerful, most selfish, most unscrupulous corporation in the world, now not only keeping blinkers on the eyes of their “subjects” but bribing or intimidating editors, education authorities, publishers of encyclopedias, radio-controllers, film producers, and politicians until it could, in cooperation with the Axis, even drag the race into a world-war and none dare utter the flagrant and indisputable truth about its share.

Hatred is, in my code, one of those sentiments that belong to the same dark damned world as pugilism and war; and I have not the least prejudice against the Catholic laity, which would be stupid. My work is to tell the world facts, as I have done in the unanswered works—they would now fill a hundred books of the size of ordinary novels—I have published in Britain or America; to say nothing of translations of some of them into French, German, Danish, Russian, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese. My friend H. G. Wells twitted me for years about my seeing “a Jesuit behind every bush.” In his later years he said harsher things about the Church of Rome than I have ever said. “It is,” he wrote, “the greatest evil in the world.” It is one of them, and I have fought it; and there, as far as this book is concerned, I leave it and turn to describe the next day’s journey, now with peas in my boots and no cheerful companions, of my pilgrimage to some unknown shrine. I had not even the encouragement now of knowing in what direction the stony road led.

At the age of 16 I had worked industriously in a humble position in the great commercial army in which every soldier had a million dollars in his pack. I was going places, rapidly. Then I had my little revolution and had to begin to advance along a different road. In 12 years I got well on the foothills, though to this rise I had never aspired. I was a professor of philosophy and university-scholar of oriental languages, a Very Reverend ... And at 28 I was a clerk earning $7.50 a week, brooding at night in the cottage of a poor widow who housed and fed me for $5 a week, with not one friend in England except the few professional men of the town, little cheered by an occasional letter from home in which my mother bravely tried to hide her feelings of pain and shame. It was a bywater, and after I had saved some $50 or so, I set out, badly dressed, awkward as a school-girl, to make my fortune in the Big City.

One non-Catholic friend I had made while I had been a priest in London, and he hailed me. He was one of those curious little men who pester well-known men with letters and, if they are weak, maintain a correspondence with them. He introduced me to the then poor and obscure Rationalist society, and for them I wrote a booklet, radiant with adolescent fire, on “Why I Left the Church” and a dreadfully stodgy small book, “Modern Rationalism,” which for a month or so paid my $8 a week for board and lodging in a bed-sitting-room in East London. My friend sent me to Bernard Shaw. He was kind but seemed to have some presentiment of the coming feud between us; and when his literary advice was “take infinite trouble about what you are going to say and dash it down as frivolously as you like,” and it seemed to me that this was the exact opposite of what he did, I did not see him again until years later. My friend introduced me also to the Ethical Lecturer Moncure D. Conway, and he fell diplomatically ill for the next Sunday and made me his substitute.

But my small hoard of dollars was shrinking. Tutorial agencies offered me ill-paid jobs at private schools on condition that I would describe myself a Protestant, which I refused. A printing works in the
country offered me the position of special reader, but I found that they expected to get, for $15 a week, a man who would detect every microscopic mistake in Latin, French, and German school-books. Presently I was back in a poor widow's back room in East London; and she watched me hungrily, as if she could X-ray my pocket. An answer to an advertisement secured an appointment as private secretary to an aristocratic lady of 90, and at least I spent six quiet and healthy months looking over Nice and the Mediterranean, or north over the lower Alps, from her villa on the hillside at Brancolar.

And here something of a path broke upon my mind, though the new life still dazed and thwarted me. My London friend had put me in touch with Leslie Stephen, then the Dean of British Letters, and he was my cordial and most generous friend until he died. At some social meeting a few years later I overheard a man ask Dr. Stanton Coit, the Anglo-American Ethical leader, how it was that a quite unimportant person like McCabe had become, apparently, so close a friend of Stephen. Coit had married a rich German widow and taken a large house in Hyde Park Gate; and he would have given his eyes to have the entree of Stephen's house on the other side of the same street; at which, he knew, I lunched, without invitation, whenever I cared. I now heard him explain: "Oh, McCabe just hangs on to his coat-tails, and Stephen is too kind to brush him off." Stephen died in 1904, and in Professor Maitland's "Life and Letters" you will find a letter of Stephen's to me in which he says: "I have thoroughly liked and respected all that I have ever known of you and your work." He was then (1902) Sir Leslie Stephen and the most distinguished literary man in Britain. I may say, in fact, that it was largely under my persuasion that he accepted the offer of a title. Everyone knew, he said, that these titles were sold by the political party in power. But I pointed out that worthy men must accept in order to keep some decent meaning in the title, and he was one of the finest men I ever met. As to the gentleman who assured folk that I held on to Stephen's coat-tails, he would have had an apoplectic fit if Maitland had published the second part of the letter, which—I still have it—describes him.

I told Stephen that I had used my ample leisure at Nice to put my monastic experience in the form of a novel and I asked him to look at the manuscript. He did so but, saying that he was no judge of fiction, he got the distinguished novelist Mrs. Humphrey Ward also to read it. I can imagine that prim lady's verdict. A few years later I had my revenge. Stephen was slowly dying of cancer, and his doctor allowed him an hour each afternoon to say good-bye to friends. Near the end it was the turn of Mrs. Humphrey Ward and myself. We met at the house and were to have half an hour each. But after 20 minutes the nurse called me, and I had 40 minutes with my generous friend and patron. He told me, with a glint of his old humor, that his nurse read both Mrs. Ward's books and mine from his library, and the time she had allotted each of us was a measure of her judgment. The manuscript of my novel ("In the Shade of the Cloister") was gladly taken later by a son of George Meredith, who was then manager of Constable's publishing house, and from critics of recognized distinction like Sir Clement Shorter it received more praise than I thought it deserved.

Stephen's verdict was: "If this incredible stuff is true, for God's sake tell it in non-fiction." That was the origin of my "Twelve Years." The Hon. Mrs. Ives—so old that she had been presented to three Sultans and three Popes and had seen Napoleon—died in the Spring and, after a giddy whirl in the Nice Carnival, I returned to London and began to write. From the cooking of an expert chef and the airy rooms of a gaily painted villa I had returned to a mean lodging, but at least I had an objective. Stephen read my manuscript, as he read the manuscripts of my early works. Beyond translating into Anglo-Saxon many of the big words I still loved he hardly touched my work. He said that
I needed no literary help. He recommended the manuscript to the best publisher in London (Smith Elder), and it soon appeared.

In Maitland's life there is no reference to Stephen's breach at this date with his old friend Dr. H. D. Traill, editor of the chief literary weekly and writer of distinction. It was because Traill, who feared to offend Catholics (I inferred), refused to admit Stephen's review of my book. In his sense of justice and loyalty to me Stephen shed one of his oldest friendships and a profitable connection.

I had the vanity in those days of paying for press cuttings—for 20 or 30 years I have not crossed a room to read a review—and I felt the first flush of success. I had stepped out, and I met many well-known folk. Somehow—I forget how—I made the acquaintance of a lady who had 20 years earlier set fire to America with her bold feminism. Mrs. Biddulph Martin, as I knew her, was now the widow of a rich British banker and so mellowed that the Parable of the Vine and the Elm was painted on marble over the mantel in her drawing room. She had one of the richest houses in Hyde Park Gate, a few doors from my friend Stephen, who almost shuddered at the proximity, as Coit also did, because she and his sister Lady Cook had once advocated something like free love. I became curiously intimate with her and her daughter, both rigorous puritans, and roamed at will over their beautiful house.

Sir John Robinson, editor of the Daily News, sent for me, but it came to nothing. He had just read my book and he paid me the sterile compliment of saying, "I was expecting a man." Passmore Edwards, the philanthropist, was kind and gave me work on his paper, the Echo, but he sold it before I reached the staff. Domville, a retired lawyer, who talked of having me trained for the bar, introduced me to Professor Westlake and others. Sir Walter Besant saw me for a time—at his suggestion I wrote a second book (a dead failure) on monastic life—but when he saw that I dabbled in Rationalism he wrote:

"Drop that or drop literature. We have to tolerate it from a man like Stephen but we will not stand it from you."

W. T. Stead tried to lure me into Spiritualism, others into the Church of England, Unitarianism, or Congregationalism. Robertson—later the Right Honorable—took me into an anarchist free-love circle. I lived in a world of 'isms: a beggar at the feast.

The sudden elevation was too much for a brain that had lingered so long on the monastic lowlands. It was the most difficult year of my life to recall, but I seem to have lost appreciation of my contacts with distinguished people—writers, editors, professors, lawyers, etc.—and been blind to the opportunities they afforded. Probably the economic uncertainty of my life disturbed me. At all events when a friend told me that the Leicester Secular Society, an old Owenite foundation but chiefly regarded as an atheist center, wanted a sort of chaplain I applied for the post. I bade good-bye to my elegant London friends, and it was final with most of them. But I saw in a few months that I had put myself in a false position. I had expected mainly to be a lecturer: they had expected me to maintain and enlarge the society much as a parson manages his parish. I had never done parochial work, and they innocently assumed that I had. We parted at the end of a year on friendly terms; and still once a year I go to the little Midland society to lecture, though I have almost abandoned lecturing. It was a worth-while experience that I have never regretted, and I had leisure to begin to write my first historical work, "Peter Abelard," my prototype in so many respects. There too I met the girl of 13, daughter of a hosiery worker, a fine little man and great reader, whom I married a year later. Then back to London to resume my literary work, insure a steady income, and prepare a nest for the bride.
4. I BECAME AN ARCH-HERETIC

A friendly correspondent recently surprised me by saying that I seemed still to be "more of a priest than a Freethinker," and it is not many months since a representative of the Catholic Welfare organiza-
tion asked me if he might have the honor of confirming a rumor, cur-
rent in American Catholic circles, that I was about to return to the
Church. This latter amazing experience inspired me to write a pro-
fession of faith which my friend Haldeman-Julius published. The
reproach that I still seem to be much of a priest recalled to my mind
an experience I had on a New Zealand boat plying between Auckland
and Sydney. The Australian Opera troupe were abroad, and I was told
that one of the leading actors, a Freethinker, was looking for me on the
crowded boat. He was half—a good half—intoxicated when I met him
in the evening, and he insulted me. Penitent but still cloudy next
morning he apologized; but when I pressed him to say why he had
mistaken me for a clergyman (which, to his mind, fully explained the
insult), he said or muttered: "Well, you see, you have that silly sort
of mug they have." Possibly in an hour of perfect sobriety he would
have said "that spiritual expression."

Once a London theatrical manager, despairing of making a profit
out of G. K. Chesterton's play "Miracles," got me, with the economist
J. A. Hobson as support, to hold a debate in his theater with Chesterton
(a mountain of flesh)—and Hilaire Belloc (a hill of flesh)—Hobson
was even leaner than I. In one of the papers next morning a reporter
observed that the labels on the performers seemed to have been con-
fused: that the materialists were too spiritual and the spiritists too ma-
terial. The truth, as is not uncommon in these transcendental mat-
ters, is that Chesterton and Belloc were eueptic and Hobson and I
dyspeptic. But I suspect that there is more than this in the suggestion
that I am still a cleric, an atheistic chaplain. It will appear in the course
of this narrative that I am as impatient of hypocrisy in leaders of or
workers in an "advanced" movement as I am in the case of priests;
and that I loathe the hard dogmatism that pushes some eccentric
opinion—as that Jesus really was a fish-god of ancient Palestine or the
hero of a rustic passion-play—because it has such a destructive air.

To the many people who do know my name, since several of my books
and booklets have sold more than 100,000 copies and at least a million
folk have heard me lecture, in America and Britain it is that of one of
the leading rebels against religious traditions. From their clerical
writers in fact they get the idea that, from some mysterious impulse
or diabolical guidance or anger at the waste of my youth, my life is
"devoted to the destruction of religion." This sketch of my life will, I
fear, show that I am a much less melodramatic and colorful personality,
and I must explain how the accidents of life so shaped my early career
that I came to devote so much of my writing and lecturing to religion.
I have explained that I had set out on a definite literary path in
writing my "Peter Abelard" and "St. Augustine and His Age." This field
of historical biography, studying the age even more than the man,
had a fascination for me, and Leonard Courtney, then editor of the
Fortnightly Review, and others as well as Sir Leslie Stephen, assured
me that I would go far along that line. But, with all respect to Vol-
taire, I must live. I had married, and, although we lived sparingly in
three rooms in a cheap district, bread and beef could not be paid for in
compliments. Just at this juncture the Ethical movement and the
Rationalist movement offered me a steady basic income. The expert
on the moral instruction of children, F. J. Gould, succeeded me in
Leicester, and I took his place in London; and the work of writing
and lecturing on both lines was entirely congenial.
Here let me begin to be a little more malicious, if you care to call it that, than convention permits in a respectable biographer. I came out of the hypocritical atmosphere of the Church expecting that, while I almost hoped that the world would prove as wicked and picturesque as our sermons represented, anti-clerical movements would be entirely honest and courageous. I found at once that my expectation had the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience. The head of the Rationalist movement who introduced me, as a substitute for Gould in the Ethical movement, to Dr. Stanton Coit, who was to find the salary, said: "Above all don't mention money, you'll get plenty if you profess that your only desire is to serve the cause." I resented the advice but Coit, though held up for a time by the strong opposition (which was overruled by Stephen) of Professor Muirhead, who considered that in my "Peter Abelard" I was too lenient in regard to sex, passed me, and I entered the commando of ethical lecturers who were to convert England to ways of virtue.

We met weekly, an interesting group, and discussed the weekly paper, which I edited. Coit was the leader. He was a skilful speaker and sounded quite Pauline in his theme: "Not the Duty of Religion, but the Religion of Duty." It is well known how he ended his public career, just when he was about to enter Parliament, in a police court on a charge of indecent assault. He was acquitted on appeal, but it overcast his life, and he spent his later years in luxurious solitude on a lonely coast. Next was Ramsay MacDonald, then a stern moral critic of politics—"No man can enter politics and remain honest," he said to me—later Premier. Ramsay and I were close friends in those days, but he cut me dead when he began to rise in politics. A time came when a London branch of the Socialist party wanted to adopt me as their candidate for Parliament. Ramsay forbade them. No Atheists, by request.

A third was Harry Snell, a farmer's boy who, though of mediocre ability, made his way by charm of character and shrewd judgment until he became Baron Snell, Labor leader in the House of Lords. With him also I contracted a close and warm friendship, and it was renewed in his later years. I never envied him or MacDonald or the great wealth which Coit acquired by marriage. Instead, whenever in later years I read of the latest compromise or blunder of MacDonald or Attlee, even of Snell, I murmured: "There but for the grace of God go I."

Miss Margaret Macmillan, another member and a social worker of restricted fame at the time, though there is now a movement afoot to raise some sort of monument to "one of the sweetest and greatest of English women," was an intolerant religious bigot. She had at least this height of character that she apologized publicly for insulting me because of my views. There were half a dozen others who in different ways became more prosperous than I, but I consider myself the most fortunate of the group. At the time I could not measure up to Gould's empty place amongst them. He was "the Saint of Rationalism." He never smoked, drank, touched a playing card, or entered a theater in his life. I liked him, though he bored me, and he was the only Rationalist leader to be just and friendly to me when the crisis came. But to resume my "malice"—the event sent me into peals of laughter at the time—he never knew that an angry and disillusioned husband, a member of the Leicester Secular Society, told me how he had, after housing and keeping Gould (as a saint) for months, detected him in tender clandestine correspondence with his wife. I am sure it never rose above kissing, but, Materialist and Atheist as I am, I could not do this to a host or friend.

At the same time began that long connection with the Rationalist Association which leaves me in my age, though I have written more than 60 publications (in Britain) and given hundreds of lectures for them, with only two or three friends in the whole Rationalist world of Britain and its Dominions. I left Leicester in 1899 or 1900 and was soon seen in the dim cubby-hole which was the cradle of the movement.
Gould's history of the movement shows that I am the one survivor of the early times—and that I was one of the original directors when the association was founded with my old friend George Jacob Holyoake as Chairman.

In 1902 my name went over the English-speaking world and I acquired a prestige to which I was not really entitled. I translated Professor Haeckel's "Riddle of the Universe." I understand that over quarter of a million copies were sold. It was a poor translation, for I had not yet a good command of German and had an imperfect knowledge of science; though I now studied it eagerly (as I will tell later) and in the following year made a crushing reply to all the apologists who had "riddled the Riddle" and "heckled Haeckel." He was, like Stephen, one of the few men of consistently high character with whom I have ever had a close friendship. I met him in Rome a year or two later, and I then spent a week with him at Jena. It was hinted by many Freethinkers as well as Christians, that Rationalism had become a profitable business. One prominent Rationalist wrote to Haeckel, who dismally sent the letter to me, that my translation was poor and he was the man for the work. In point of fact, I received $100 for the work—and the American rights of my translation were sold to Harpers for $100, of which I got nothing—and Haeckel, who charged little for the 20 translations of his book, gave all such fees to the Jena Museum of Evolution.

But while this translation carried my name round, the world it brought fresh evidence of the disgusting nature of much of the religious-Rationalist controversy in which I was now immersed. Haeckel was modest about his book. In the closing years of the last century he was troubled to see Germany being ruined, he said, by Socialism on the one hand and Catholicism on the other so he strung together in a "sketchbook" a number of papers he had by him on science and religion and gave the book the title "World-Riddles." He hoped, he says plainly in the preface, that he was helping to get the race a little nearer to "that immeasurably distant goal," the solution of the riddles. Yet he was harshly travestied everywhere as a dogmatic Materialist who pretended that he had solved the riddle of existence. He was a rigorous puritan yet his character was slandered by the clergy, as mine was, and for 20 years they kept in circulation a lie about "Haeckel's Forgerys" which the leading scientific men of Germany and Austria had denounced. Few scientific men in Europe had more honor for his work than he, yet hardly a scientific man in Britain would say a word about him. I heard that Sir E. Ray Lankester, then a leading zoologist, whom I knew slightly, had heavily complained of my claims for Haeckel, and when I wrote him he replied:

"I quite agree with you that Haeckel is one of the first living biologists. There are not any others who have the same wide knowledge and experience, and consequent point of view. He knows his zoology, botany, physiology, and pathology—also geology—and has traveled and has a keen interest in and knowledge of no small degree of philology, archeology, and ethnography."

Yet while the clergy and others were assuring the public that Haeckel had no scientific authority neither Lankester nor any other scientist would speak out.

Haeckel had, for his purpose, summarized the teaching of all branches of science, and the branch of which he knew least was, of course, physics. Sir Oliver Lodge, then the darling of the churches, but so little eminent in science that for years the authorities refused, in spite of clerical pressure, to make him President of the British Association, fastened upon this. In a courteous letter he invited me to cross swords with him in The Hibbert Journal, but he soon lost his spiritual calm, travestied Haeckel's position, and garbled his quotations. But the chief point is that he ridiculed the idea, which Haeckel had made fundamental to his structure, that matter and energy are just two aspects of one unknown substance. Since the discovery of Relativity
this is a platitude of physical science, yet such is popular education and such the reluctance of scientific men to speak when religion is concerned, that, as I may recall later, Jeans and Eddington had the whole religious world crying with hosannas that this new discovery and that of the composition of the atom (which Haeckel taught, and I followed him in 1903) had magnificently shattered "the Materialism of the 19th century" of which Haeckel was the prophet!

Another aspect of this lamentable situation was to appear in a few years, driving me yet further in the direction of a ruthless realism. Meantime I attended as delegate the International Freethought Congresses at Rome (1904) and Paris (1905), and I saw how overwhelmingly and enthusiastically anti-clerical France and Italy were. The Italian government, in fact, halved our expenses in Italy; which led to an amusing adventure. A friend of mine went one night to see a lady in Rome when her bully appeared and demanded more money. My friend flourished his card and walked quietly out of the room, saying: "I am a delegate to the Freethinkers Congress and am entitled to a reduced fee in everything."

In 1908 I published my two-volume "Life and Letters of G. J. Holyoake," another of the fine-natured men of that generation whom I had the pleasure of knowing before they passed away. The Times, I remember, said that the book just fell short of being a great work; and the five trunks of letters and other documents entrusted to me, illustrating the history of radicalism and Rationalism since 1830, gave me an incomparable knowledge of that side of 19th-century life. But the fate of the book fanned my growing resentment of the tactics of many anti-clericals.

I was already aware how the public is misled by the suppressions of a biographer. While I was in the Church, Cardinal Manning died, and my friend Father David was in close touch with the priest who was appointed to write the biography. Such facts as that Manning had, David told me, a natural daughter (from pre-Catholic but not pre-clerical days), a nun, all agreed to suppress, but this priest wanted to be frank about Manning's attitude to the Jesuits and to Cardinal Newman and others. It was a tradition that Manning had adopted the cry of old Cato, Neumannus est delundus ("Newman Must Be Destroyed"). All this was cut out. When I said to Bishop Paterson that I wondered how the gentle Newman could incur such ire he said: "My dear Professor, Newman was an angel by grace, but he was a tiger by nature." Catholic biographies are mainly instruments for suppressing the truth.

My book was printed and bound, and copies were sent to special members. Sir E. Brabrook, who got one, at once wrote Bradlaugh's daughter and J. M. Robertson that certain letters of Ingersoll to Holyoake which I included were damaging to Bradlaugh, Foote, and other leading members of the Freethought movement in Britain, and they presented the Rationalist publishers with an ultimatum: unless these letters and some remarks in my work were struck out, though it meant breaking up hundreds of copies of the bound two-volume work and reprinting many pages, Brabrook, Robertson, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, and other Bradlaughites would quit the Association.

Let me explain. The most serious of the feuds that had enlivened the movement, as happens in all movements and organizations, in the second half of the 19th century was that of Bradlaugh and Holyoake. Bradlaugh died first, and his daughter and J. M. Robertson carried the feud into the life of him which they wrote, and it was my duty, when the time came for me to write the biography of Holyoake, to relieve his memory of their grave misrepresentations. Holyoake had written a short defense of himself but wealthy contributors to the funds had prevailed upon him reluctantly to withdraw it. There was the familiar cry, like an echo from my clerical days: At any cost there must be no "scandal."

I, on the contrary, always held the wicked maxim that as a biog-
raper and historian I must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; but I may confess that the Rationalist publisher, Charles Watts, who had read and passed every word to which the Bradlaughites so violently objected, had not encouraged me to put Bradlaugh on the high level on which I put Holyoake. Watts had in his possession, and lent me a copy of, the legally suppressed life of Bradlaugh, which was known as "the Libelous Life." Libel in Britain law really means libel. Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner often dined with Watts when the Bradlaughites entered his movement, their own being irretrievably wrecked, and as I listened to their prim galettes in his study I wondered what the effect on her would be if I told her that within a yard or so of her, behind a row of innocent books, was a copy of the work which she hated and feared above all others.

Foote, Bradlaugh's successor, also obtained an advance copy of the book and breathed fire and slaughter unless references to him in quotations of Ingersoll's letters were withdrawn. I was not consulted but important passages of letters of Ingersoll to Holyoake, particularly references to Bradlaugh, for whom Ingersoll had little respect, were suppressed; though the work even as published shows that Ingersoll, for whom every British Freethinker had a deep regard, did not think much of any leading British Freethinker except Holyoake. The storm passed, but I now had a leaning to rebellion in the ranks of the rebels, and the idea began to be whispered from ear to ear that I was tactless and lacking in respect for the saints and martyrs—what a book I could write about them!—of the new faith. The Bradlaughites nursed a silent but deep hostility to me, and this rose to an articulate and pitiful vindictiveness when the time came for an open quarrel with me.

Another reason for withdrawing and reprinting many pages and rebinding the book was that I had included without permission (not then knowing the law) a candid letter of the Right Hon. (later Lord) John Morley to Holyoake. I now asked his permission and he emphatically and nervously refused. It had been written when, after the death of J. S. Mill, Gladstone had behaved outrageously. Morley had then written Holyoake—they both knew Mill and Gladstone—that Mill was "as much superior to Gladstone morally as he was intellectually." What a gem that would have been in Morley's later three-volume life of Gladstone! He barely mentions the incident and he tones down Gladstone's attitude. I began to wonder if my exchange of old saints for new was quite so splendid a bargain.

In the following year I had a new enlarging experience. I had been interested in Spain since 1900, when an American engineer who had spent 20 years there opened my eyes to the tyranny of Church and State and the extent of political corruption. I added Spanish to my little repertory of languages, and when Professor Tarrida del Marmol found refuge in London from the new Spanish Inquisition we became close friends. He was an intimate friend of Francisco Ferrer and, like him, an Anarchist of the Tolstoy anti-violence school, though he belonged to an aristocratic family. Ferrer was in England, where I corresponded with him and hoped to meet him, when the riots of 1909 broke out in Barcelona, and I knew that he hurried back to Spain for the sole purpose of checking the bloodshed. He was arrested and, after a glaring scandal of a military "trial," judicially murdered. I crossed to Paris the night we heard the news and met fugitives from Barcelona. Within a week of my return I wrote, and within another week my friend Watts published, my "Martyrdom of Ferrer." It had a large circulation and moved the Australian Federal Cabinet (with whom I discussed the matter the next year) to send official (and unheeded) inquiries to Spain.

William Archer was commissioned by Harper to make an "impartial" inquiry for them and write a book. A distinguished American official said to me that in this book Archer "tried so hard to stand up straight that he fell over backwards." In simpler English Archer trimmed and
was unjust to Ferrer. Various writers, including Belloc, had fired trumpery and vicious booklets, though they were completely ignorant of Spanish affairs, at the murdered man, and I lectured. I should think, a hundred times on the truth. A difficulty was that Ferrer was an Anarchist of the philosophical school, and the press as culpably misrepresented that school as it today misrepresents Communism. Some of the directors of the Rationalist Association opposed the publication of my book on that ground. My explorations of this political jungle during my week in Paris led me into an adventure that is worth recording.

My French and Spanish friends there said, eyeing me obliquely, that if I really wanted to understand Anarchy and Ferrer, I ought to see the famous international Anarchist, well known to the police of many countries, Charles Malatesta. They gave me an address on the site of the old fortifications, and I set off at once and soon found myself in a dark and dirty district through which I had almost to find my way by match-light. At last a grille opened in the garden door of an isolated house, and a grim old lady challenged me. Presently a mellow cultivated voice cried "Bring him in," and I found myself sitting at table with a notorious Anarchist and his English mistress. A cabinet of beautiful silver—his grandfather had been physician to Napoleon—and some fine oil paintings hung on the walls. Malatesta was, in conventional language, a scholar and a gentleman. Our meal lasted three hours, and the empty bottles, if I remember rightly, numbered six; and I learned more about European politics than I had learned in 10 years. Next day Charles, in correct bourgeois costume, took me to tea in the salon of a distinguished Senator, later a leading cabinet minister, who greatly esteemed him.

I had in the meantime cut myself loose from Dr. Stanton Coit's apron strings and was making about $2,000 a year by writing (mainly for the Rationalist Association) and lecturing. I had, by methods which I will describe later, acquired a broad and fairly good knowledge of several branches of science, and was, under a professional lecture agent, giving popular expositions, with stereopticon views, all over Britain. My slides were at first extremely crude but the novelty of a lecture on "The Evolution of Man" was such that halls were overcrowded. Speaking first for the Glasgow Secular Society I had such a packed audience, in a large fruit-auction room, that the net proceeds gave me the largest fee I have ever had for a lecture. Gradually I discovered how to get better pictures—I made hundreds of slides myself—and will tell later how I became (I understood) the chief, certainly the busiest, popularizer of science at that time.

Ethical, Rationalist, social, and historical lectures filled the Sundays, often morning and evening, and for the Scots in the afternoon also. I have a book containing a faded list of my lecture engagements that goes back to the year 1902. By 1909 I was giving a hundred lectures a year with an appalling amount of cheap and tiresome traveling, and often enduring equally tiresome accommodation to save expense for some poor society. The variety was educative. I have spent a week end in a miner's cottage in Wales and two days later had tea with a baron in one of the stately homes of England. I often spent the night, after lecturing, in the houses of doctors and clergymen, rich men and aristocratic ladies. I spoke in hospital wards—two or three times in a hospital for the insane—and university halls, drawing rooms, Labor Churches, Socialist rooms, chapels, schools, and slums. I was being educated.

My wife had to introduce me afresh to my younger children after, perhaps, a fortnight's absence; and the absence was soon to extend to six months or more. Those were cheaper days and, with one servant, I could own and maintain a nice seven-room villa and take the growing colony down to the sea for a month in the summer. Dyspepsia lingered from the miserable years in a monastery and was not alleviated by the rush of my life and the irregular feeding. But they were happy years.
There is a quaint old ceremony in one rustic locality in England in which a flitch (side) of bacon is given to any married couple who can bring evidence that they had not quarrelled during several years. My wife and I were qualified to win it in that decade; and with the two girls and two boys who came along we had only the usual incidental troubles of childhood. They were taught neither religion nor irreligion, and they learned the social code of conduct with ease and developed fine characters. Never in my life have I laid a finger on any of them, and they clung to me in difficult days. The virus of an exaggerated feminism had not yet entered our Eden; but here to prevent a misunderstanding I must explain my work in the great early fight for women's rights.

5. INTO A LARGER WORLD

Some time in the year 1900, as nearly as I can fix the date, three people sat, under the cynical smile of the police, in the vestibule of the House of Commons. They were cranks—you will remember that a crank is a crooked little thing that makes the wheels go round—awaiting the issue of the debate on one of those crank bills for the political emancipation of woman over which representatives of the people inside were cracking jokes or gloomily predicting that to pass such a bill would spell the doom of the Empire. The three were Mrs. Pankhurst, widow of a freethinking Manchester doctor, Mrs. Woolsthnolme-Elmy, a frail little woman (also a Freethinker) from the north who read eloquent appeals for the rights of women in the Ethical weekly paper: and one Londoner, Joseph McCabe, who had written these appeals in the quaint belief—he had so many quaint beliefs—that justice to women and the workers was involved in the ethical scheme of life. If I remember rightly, I was then the only male writer or lecturer in Britain who joined these wicked women in their rebellion against the will of God and the convenience of man.

As soon as I had recovered from the giddiness that was caused by my fall from heaven to earth I began to apply my new social principles to the collective life, in which I had hitherto not taken the slightest interest. Contrary to the frivolous talk about a man losing all principles when he loses faith in God the readjustment to life is easy and natural. I have still the Latin volume from which I learned moral theology 60 years ago, and I see that even then I was much attracted to the opinion of the critical Irish Schoolman, Duns Scotus, whom I thought and think a much deeper thinker than Thomas Aquinas, that the divine prohibition did not make acts bad but laid emphasis on their inherent badness or social injuriousness. So in practice, most folk recognize, when the commandment is taken out of its divine frame you see its social sanction the more clearly. Only in regard to one clause of the Christian code, the elaborate sex-clause, is there any difficulty. In the Decalogue it merely refers to the one-sided property rights of the male. The expansion in the Christian code is based upon ancient Persian superstition that while the good God created the spirit the devil had created the body . . .

Most of my readers, however, will have read these opinions of mine. It is enough here to say that the social principles of behavior soon took clear shape in my mind and it was not long before I steadily perceived their application to social problems. In this I was immensely helped by studying the life of the great Welsh reformer Robert Owen, in whose honor I was engaged to deliver a special lecture a year or two after quitting the Church. I had early made the acquaintance of a fine old lady whose father had been an Owenite enthusiast, and she had pinned and scraped all her life in order to get together a fund for the purpose of reviving the memory and the influence of Owen. An enthusiast for some different and less unselfish cause diverted her
$40,000, and the one lecture I was engaged to deliver was the only idealist fruit of her sacrifices that I ever saw. How many such cases have I known! But it made a deep impression on my mind when I learned that 70 or 80 years earlier, in an age of profound reaction and of few and narrow liberalisms, the Atheist Owen had advocated the abolition of war, the emancipation of women, free universal education, Socialism (in the older sense), the reform of the treatment of criminals, religious freedom, democracy, humanization of marriage and toleration of free unions, Trade Unions, and higher wages for the workers. The Wilberforces and Shaftesburys were paltry, in their one reform, by comparison with the forgotten Owen. Within a year or so I held the whole range of those heresies of his which had not yet become actualities.

Until the suffrage was granted I gave a large number of lectures (including some in New York) and wrote a book or two, especially "Women in Political Evolution"—which even the pious Lady Snowden told me was her "bible"—for the ladies, never accepting a cent for any lecture in that cause. Gradually the jeers and sneers disappeared. The churches and the clergy came in at the 10th hour. Once I was invited to address the London Irish Women's Suffrage Society; though I never learned how these Catholic girls would receive me, for when I reached the little room I heard that the members of the society were Mrs. Pankhurst's bodyguard and, as the lady was to be arrested that night, they were all "on duty" at her house. My only satisfaction was that I went and saw her arrested. One lady friend of mine after another went to jail—one insisted that I was their chaplain and demanded that the authorities admit me to visit her—in those days, but the first World War, with its heavy demand for women workers, did more than the Holy Ghost to enlighten the politicians, and the reform was won... I wandered in the great crowd which celebrated the victory, and saw a parson on nearly every one of the platforms. I was not invited; nor to any later function.

I had introduced my wife to the movement, and she entered a local group of large and white-hot enthusiasm. One of them slashed with a knife a painting of Velasquez in the National Gallery. Another tried to break into the British Museum with a torch. I had no objection to the idea of martyrdom but unfortunately they began to make martyrs of their menfolk. Ladies told me that at their meetings they heard the slogan: "All Men are Tyrants, All Women are Slaves." Need I continue? I will tell later of the inevitable separation.

This has carried me far ahead into the second decade of the century, but meantime my experience had broadened. I have already said how I spent a year in Belgium, six months in France, a month in Italy, and a few weeks in Germany. In 1910 I made my first world-tour. Somewhere about that time a Spiritualist medium made the interesting discovery that I am the reincarnation of St. Paul. This must have been because I am, like him, "insignificant in bodily presence though somewhat of a power with voice and pen"—also that I am ever ready to "withstand Peter and the other apostles to the face"—but I really have not the itching feet and apostolic ardor, to say nothing of Paul's contempt of the flesh. All my journeys were responses to welcome invitations. In 1910 the Australian and New Zealand Rationalists invited me, and I set out on my first 30,000-mile journey.

This is no place to linger over the trivialities of seven weeks' life on a boat. In order to reduce expenses, as is always demanded of the rebel apostle, I had to sail in a no-class (or entirely third class) 10,000-ton hulk, which took 400 passengers, mostly emigrants, as a film on its load of cargo. On the third day out a young Irish attorney wound up one of the long arguments I had with him by saying, more in sorrow than in anger, "You'll find your level in McCabe's books." He had one under his arm, and I had almost to produce my birth-certificate to convince him that I was the author. He talked, and after giving a
few lectures to the giddy crowd I found myself in a privileged and more comfortable position.

I was the more comfortable, too, because my friend Mrs. Donaldson (of the Donaldson Line) had given me a bottle of effective anti-sickness stuff, made up from some secret recipe in the family. Young ladies who begged doses of it complained, or affected to complain, that I had given them an aphrodisiac, and the young men clamored for the secret. It was even surmised that I secretly dosed the stern, pale young chaplain of the boat, who frowned upon this popularity of an Atheist in his parish. At all events before the end of the voyage he fell deeply and palpably in love with the wife of another parson who was amongst the passengers, and the boat rocked with laughter when they spent the last night sitting, hand in hand, on the hatchway. Nor did I lose the moral when one day we had to bury a man, and most of the passengers, in shirt and trousers, cigarette in mouth, listened while the chaplain read: "We thank thee, O Lord, that it hath pleased thee to call this our brother" or words to that effect. The chief officer had told me that the man was so rotten with syphilis that he had had to pour so much rum into two sailors before they would prepare the body that they stitched him to his canvas shroud.

In the area of the Southern Ocean in which the Waratah had turned turtle and completely disappeared a year earlier we encountered just such a "tremendous sea," and its 60-foot waves battered us for three days and drove us out of our course. I had cut my program too fine, and when we left the first Australian port for Adelaide, betting ran high on whether McCabe would reach Melbourne in time for his lecture. The chief engineer tried to assure me that he burned several hundred tons of additional coal "pushing the old tub along," but I had already discovered that, as the captain blandly said to me, "all ships' officers are liars, as they have no other recreation." But a new calamity broke. My baggage was laid out on deck in good time, for a special launch was to rush me ashore, when it was found that a bag containing the slides for my first lecture and my dress suit was missing. I later learned from the chief officer that the chaplain had bribed the pious young third officer to put it ashore at Albany, four days sail away. But amongst the local Rationalists who met me in the launch—and were astonished to see hundreds of passengers line the boat and cheer the arch-rebel as I left—was the chief surgeon of Adelaide, later my esteemed friend, Dr. Pulleyne. We had four hours before the train left for Melbourne, where my first lecture was advertised for the following night. The ship's doctor had lent me his evening dress, and Pulleyne rushed me in his car to the house of the Medical Officer of Health, who had a fine scientific and Rationalist library. I selected a bunch of books from which slides could be made, and our Melbourne folk were warned to have a maker ready. I spent half the night selecting pictures . . .

In short, I opened to a crowded house in Melbourne next night and began a surprisingly successful tour. From business-like semi-American Melbourne I passed to Sydney, where the folk are as sunny as their great harbor, and in another week or two was sweltering in a sultry drought that lingered in Queensland and smelling the thousands of corpses of cattle on the fields. Still, contrary to expectations, crowds came to hear me. On a pleasure boat along the coast I heard a woman explain that she had never heard a lecture in her life but she was determined to hear this one on the Evolution of Man.

On Sunday, the workers wanted to hear me speak on Ferrer, and, as only Trade Unions and parsons could hire halls in Brisbane on Sunday, the Plasterers Union enrolled me. If I have not been struck out for not paying any fees I am still a Trade Unionist, but on the only occasion on which I practiced my trade, patching a small area of my ceiling, I was infected with anthrax and the doctor had to mutilate me grievously to save my right arm.

A month after the heat of Queensland I was lecturing on the fringe

33 EIGHTY YEARS A REBEL
of the New Zealand Alps and looking over fields in which, they told me, thousands of sheep were slowly dying under 10 feet of snow. I still had enthusiastic crowds and made warm friends, including the Chief Justice, Sir Robert Stout, and his brother-in-law the Hon. John MacGregor, with whom I stayed. He took me one day to the races—a novel spectacle, with a brilliant sun flashing on the colors and glistening on frost-laden trees—and introduced me to the chief orator of the New Zealand Parliament. "Tom," he said to him, "meet a better speaker than you are." They were two grand survivors of the progressive New Zealand of 30 to 40 years earlier.

It was an arduous but inspiring tour, but when I sailed away I left behind a host of new friends—and faced many who were no longer friends. My adventures were described by me in monthly letters to the Rationalist organ in London. My travels even in Britain now began to have touches of color and glints of humor, and the editor asked me to send in a sparkling chronicle every month. After a few months he abruptly, without explanation, cancelled the order. Another crime was added to my "hostility to Bradlaugh."

To that we will return, but I may briefly tell here my further relations with the Australasians. Amongst my hearers in Melbourne had been the well-known lecture-agent, Carl Smythe, who had piloted Proctor, Shackleton, and all the more distinguished lecturers. Proctor's tour had been the high-light of his career, and he was good—or misguided enough—to think that as an exponent of science I equalled that brilliant popular lecturer. He invited me to run a tour under his direction in the winter of 1913, and I agreed. I was now experienced in the technique of travel, and I avoided boredom on the long voyage by writing a book. It seems only the other day, but the boat was not yet fitted with wireless, and the empty "Marcaroni Cabin," as the crew called it, was put at my disposal. There, high above the madding crowd, above the sparkling tropical sea or the angry Southern Ocean, with only the albatrosses peeping in at me, I wrote the most important book I had yet written, "The Tyranny of Shams."

Before leaving London I had delivered a lecture with that title, explaining that it was my last will and testament in case I did not return. It was the full and candid social creed I had constructed for myself in 17 years, and characteristically, I cast it in the form of an ironic attack on the "idols" (in Bacon's sense) which divert the attention of most folk from the truth. Consistency, Emerson said, is the virtue of cowards. I have received many epithets but never that, yet that is, line for line, my creed today, as it had been since 1900—Atheism, Socialism, Republicanism, and all the rest. This inspired the book I now wrote, and it was so candid, even in the analysis of ethical ideas, that the Rationalist monthly refused to review it! The public gave it a good reception, but somehow I had selected a publisher who was more accustomed to issuing memoirs or biographies of duchesses, and after selling 1,500 copies in a few months and sending 500 to America he refused to republish. Leonard D. Abbot told me that the 500 copies sent to New York were sold in a week or two and (after reviewing it in his paper) he received hundreds of demands for it that could not be fulfilled.

But this tour in Australia was a failure. We began with the old "Full House" signs in Melbourne, and then a blizzard, a fierce political election, fell upon us. Hastily Smythe switched off to Tasmania and New Zealand, and then back to Sydney, but the success was so slight that we agreed to abandon the tour. My friends in New Zealand, Sir Robert Stout, Professor Macmillan-Brown (Rector of New Zealand University), and others smoothed the rugged path as much as they could but from the first town—where I became an Antarctic explorer, since I had a drink in the nearest pub to the South Pole—it was a failure. Rationalists sulked because I would not, being under a professional agent who would not tolerate it, lecture on Rationalism, yet the public was warned against me by the Churches:
mote, and I left my four children in the care of my wife and her “mother's help” and sailed. I had hardly been in America a month when Germany declared its submarine zone round Britain, and my wife implored me not to take the risk. But I will tell later of that stirring six months in New York. In June I refused to wait longer and returned through the shark-infested zone and at once sought national service.

I saw John Buchan (later Lord Tweedsmuir) at the Foreign Office, and he cordially welcomed my offer. I was, he said, much esteemed by Spanish Liberals, and I must write articles for their paper to check the Conservatives who (including the King) were dangerously disposed to snatch the prize which the Germans dangled before them—Gibraltar. Our little bureau for press-work in neutral countries soon became the Information Department, and until the end of the war I wrote most of the articles which were translated and found their way, mostly by bribery, into the neutral press. Some of my articles appeared even in Viennese papers. The Dutch bought copy freely from both sides, and needy editors in many cities of Europe now bought automobiles for the first time in their lives.

One war experience is worth recording. About the middle of the war optimistic articles began to appear in the British press saying that Germany was rapidly using up its man-power and must soon collapse. These reports were chiefly spread by Hilaire Belloc, who told a friend of mine that he had his figures from the French War Office, and by Masterman, whom I knew to be Viscount Haldane's chief lieutenant in the British War Office. I studied the official German annual, the Deutsches Jahrbuch, for the 10 years before 1915, and found that these optimists were at least 2,000,000 astray in their figures! A friend spoke of the matter to Lord Haldane, and he invited me to his house at 11 on the Sunday morning. As I was due to lecture at that hour I wrote and told him, and I said that I would gladly see him at any other hour on the Sunday or any other day. He replied that “the hour you suggest” is impossible, and I heard no more. He did not want to hear my story. No editor in London would take even a short article on the figures but eventually I saw Lord Northcliffe. In 10 minutes he was convinced that I was right, and he compelled the editor of his Daily Mail to accept; though the editor had his revenge by getting his Berlin correspondent, Price, to contradict me in the same issue, and Belloc, of course, was playful in his weekly about the ex-monk who had become a military expert. Within six months Price generously acknowledged in the Mail that he was wrong, and when events plainly proved this, Belloc explained to his friends that he and the French military had been misled because for years before the war the Germans had falsified the figures of population in their official publications. It was just from those publications that I had got the correct figures.

Northcliffe added another irony to my growing repertory. He lent me a manuscript article that had been sent to him by one of the leading war-correspondents in the Dardanelles theater. It was, he said, entirely true but so bad that even he dare not publish it. We had lost a decisive battle against the Turks through a general's concern for his guts. At a critical moment he had decided that an action was successfully completed so that he could go to dinner. The Turks returned and recovered the lost ground. One does not read these things—I heard many—in histories of our glorious campaigns.

It may be useful to add here my experience in the Second World War. As soon as war was declared I wrote six leading officials in the new Ministry of Information offering my services and explaining my experiences and qualifications. Not one of them replied. My friend Lord Snell, then Labor leader in the House of Lords, told me that there were already 600 applicants on a waiting list. The truth was soon out, for London journalists publicly poured scorn on the incompetence of the immense staff (999) of the Ministry housed in the shining new building of London University. Months before the war began the staff-
mote, and I left my four children in the care of my wife and her "mother's help" and sailed. I had hardly been in America a month when Germany declared its submarine zone round Britain, and my wife implored me not to take the risk. But I will tell later of that stirring six months in New York. In June I refused to wait longer and returned through the shark-infested zone and at once sought national service.

I saw John Buchan (later Lord Tweedsmuir) at the Foreign Office, and he cordially welcomed my offer. I was, he said, much esteemed by Spanish Liberals, and I must write articles for their paper to check the Conservatives who (including the King) were dangerously disposed to snatch the prize which the Germans dangled before them—Gibraltar. Our little bureau for press-work in neutral countries soon became the Information Department, and until the end of the war I wrote most of the articles which were translated and found their way, mostly by bribery, into the neutral press. Some of my articles appeared even in Viennese papers. The Dutch bought copy freely from both sides, and needy editors in many cities of Europe now bought automobiles for the first time in their lives.

One war experience is worth recording. About the middle of the war optimistic articles began to appear in the British press saying that Germany was rapidly using up its man-power and must soon collapse. These reports were chiefly spread by Hilaire Belloc, who told a friend of mine that he had his figures from the French War Office, and by Masterman, whom I knew to be Viscount Haldane's chief lieutenant in the British War Office. I studied the official German annual, the Deutsches Jahrbuch, for the 10 years before 1915, and found that these optimists were at least 2,000,000 astray in their figures! A friend spoke of the matter to Lord Haldane, and he invited me to his house at 11 on the Sunday morning. As I was due to lecture at that hour I wrote and told him, and I said that I would gladly see him at any other hour on the Sunday or any other day. He replied that "the hour you suggest" is impossible, and I heard no more. He did not want to hear my story. No editor in London would take even a short article on the figures but eventually I saw Lord Northcliffe. In 10 minutes he was convinced that I was right, and he compelled the editor of his Daily Mail to accept; though the editor had his revenge by getting his Berlin correspondent, Price, to contradict me in the same issue, and Belloc, of course, was playful in his weekly about the ex-monk who had become a military expert. Within six months Price generously acknowledged in the Mail that he was wrong, and when events plainly proved this, Belloc explained to his friends that he and the French military had been misled because for years before the war the Germans had falsified the figures of population in their official publications. It was just from those publications that I had got the correct figures.

Northcliffe added another irony to my growing repertory. He lent me a manuscript article that had been sent to him by one of the leading war-correspondents in the Dardanelles theater. It was, he said, entirely true but so bad that even he dare not publish it. We had lost a decisive battle against the Turks through a general's concern for his guts. At a critical moment he had decided that an action was successfully completed so that he could go to dinner. The Turks returned and recovered the lost ground. One does not read these things—I heard many—in histories of our glorious campaigns.

It may be useful to add here my experience in the Second World War. As soon as war was declared I wrote six leading officials in the new Ministry of Information offering my services and explaining my experiences and qualifications. Not one of them replied. My friend Lord Snell, then Labor leader in the House of Lords, told me that there were already 600 applicants on a waiting list. The truth was soon out, for London journalists publicly poured scorn on the incompetence of the immense staff (999) of the Ministry housed in the shining new building of London University. Months before the war began the staff-
list had been drawn up, largely out of sweepings of Tory propagandist colleges. Later I saw that the Censorship advertised for men, at a salary of less than $20 a week. I asked if my knowledge of languages and countries was of any use to them, and they put me through a farce of an examination, controlled by two girls in their early 20's, and rejected me.

To return to 1919. The troops were in open mutiny at their long detention abroad. I heard on good authority that there was a mild panic in Downing Street and Buckingham Palace, and the War Office organized lectures for the men and invited me to cooperate. An officer who received, probably, $2,000 or $3,000 a year and, as I saw, had not enough work to fill three honest hours a day, told me that I would be paid $5 a lecture (a day) but I could "wangle" more on expenses. At Cologne I found that the clergy had tried to monopolize the lecturing and had fed the troops to the teeth with talks about the Church and the Empire. A bishop, two deans, several canons, and a number of clergymen occupied most the mess-table, and I privately learned that they proposed that I be boycotted. I soon overrode that and the colonel, though religious, made me top-lecturer. The troops, hearing that I had brought a lantern lecture on "The Evolution of Man," called for it twice a day in the various camps spread over the Rhine Province, while canons had two or three lectures a week. One night I had to pick up an archdeacon, a prim and conceited man, for the journey home, and he tried to read me a lesson on the wickedness of depriving people of their faith. When we reached Cologne I dropped him in the Komoedien Strasse. I did not warn him, of course, that it is Cologne's Street of the Whores. My final experience was that when I was leaving a rather young canon followed me to the car and said: "Try not to be too hard on us, McCabe." This is the last time I have been in such high company.

But of the war-muddles, scandals, extravagances, etc., that I learned, in both wars, on both sides of the Atlantic there is not space to say much here. I mention a few because these things are an integral part of my education in life. I would add only at this stage that the war put an end to my long and inspiring association with Professor Haeckel. He severely blamed England and sent back to British universities the honors and diplomas they had awarded him. In 1917 a Swiss professor wrote me that Haeckel was ill and in deep distress. He had been duped by the authorities at Berlin, who had made false statements to him in order to induce him to sign an indictment of Britain. He died in 1919. Let me place it on record that in character he was one of the finest scientific men of his generation; and there were, and are, many like him in Germany and Austria. Of his scientific distinction his international gold medals and diplomas, nearly a hundred in number, give sufficient proof.

In 1923 I made my third and last voyage to Australia and New Zealand. When, a few years later, there was a quarrel in London, the Melbourne Rationalists assisted my critics by publishing a virulent four-page account written by their lecturer of that visit, and I must explain. Recently an American candid friend wrote me that it is a pity I have such a bad temper; and this, I found, was said in the New York Truth Seeker to be clear from the fact that I have had so many quarrels. I have now in this sketch covered 55 years of my life, and I cannot recall that I have had to record any quarrels at all. My differences with the Church of Rome will hardly be called personal quarrels, and in the wrangle between my publisher and the followers of Mr. Bradlaugh over my "Life of Holyoake" I had taken no part. I did not, in fact, quarrel or make any public complaint about this visit to Australia in 1923. Whether I had ground to do so I leave the reader to judge. The last virtue in the world that I would claim is gentleness, and the last august counsel I would think of favoring is to turn the other cheek to the smiter. I once made Theodore Roosevelt, who had apparently never
heard the joke, roar with laughter by telling him that I am a peaceful man but that "if any man smites me on one cheek I smite him promptly on both." On principle. The evil-minded must not be suffered to get away with it.

In 1923 the Rationalist authorities in London told me that the Australians wanted another visit, and on the explicit understanding that they had asked for me I signed a contract. The Rationalist Association would guarantee $1,000 for expenses—which the sum barely covered—and would, if the net profit which the Australians and New Zealanders would undertake to give me, did not reach another $1,000, bring it up to that sum. But I had not been an hour in Melbourne when the local leaders bluntly told me that they had not asked for me, did not want me, and had never signed or seen any agreement. They had, however, organized a heavy schedule of lectures in Victoria—16 in 14 days, I think—and I set my teeth. The lectures, some of which were given in the huge City Hall, netted about $4,000. Of this they gave $350 to one of their members who had blunderingly and most extravagantly organized the lectures, and to me they handed an account for, I believe, $300: the deficit on my lectures, they said, which they had decided to take out of the profit of my lectures in Sydney. I made no complaint, and they pleasantly saw me off at the depot.

Traveling with me was one of the directors of their society, a well-to-do Socialist merchant and Federal Cabinet Minister. He beguiled me with stories of the corruption of the Australian Labor movement, to a Congress of which he was going. Two dejected-looking Rationalists met us at Sydney and said that one of their group, a schoolmaster, had embezzled the $400 they had collected for the organization of my lectures, so there would be none. I induced them to call an urgent meeting, that evening, of their friends, and told my traveling companion to see the delinquent and squeeze what money he could out of him. I had little trouble in persuading the Sydney Rationalists, who are of a more genial and generous character than Melbourne folk, to arrange a series of lectures, and I went off to Brisbane, where another fine and generous group of men gave me a warm reception. The lectures in Sydney were the success I had anticipated, though the deduction of $300 which I "owed" Melbourne and a further $300 for local organizers did not leave me rich.

Melbourne had entrusted the New Zealand tour to a thirsty Labor man of no experience, and it was not long before I smelt his breath. We had the usual crowds at Auckland, where I was always happy, and at Wellington, where I had so many friends. At Wellington there was a moment of unpleasantness to mar the general geniality. The Chief Justice Sir Robert Stout boldly took the chair for me, but when he came into the room he handed me a copy of the London Rationalist monthly and asked: "What's the meaning of that?" In the first issue of the paper after I had sailed away, in the interest of the Association, they had published a criticism of me on the first page. The excuse was that it was merely a criticism of my materialist ideas: the reason was that the author-was rich. Sir Robert remembered it and my explanation when, a few years later, they tried (as I will tell), in vain, to destroy our friendship.

At Christchurch, where there was a strong Rationalist society, I overheard a violent quarrel about profits of the local leaders with my organizer, whom they ordered out of the hotel. They warned me against him. In short, at the end of the tour I had great difficulty in getting even $200 from him. He would send the money—probably a further $600—on to London. I never received a cent and the Melbourne folk who had appointed him would not move a finger to help me. I must really be a bad-tempered man to attract all these experiences.

Another experience of the tour was that a New Zealand lady gave me $500, stipulating that for family reasons it must remain a secret. I confided the matter to my wife on my return, and when my quarrel
with Watts began he heard of it and made it the ground of a charge that I had lied about my profits. All Rationalist and Secularist workers have received such gifts—they are often pressed upon them with great earnestness—for a century, but this was the first I had accepted, and as an alleviation of a heavy and irritating tour and my losses. I may add that the only legacy I have ever received, a small one, in my long life came from a Catholic.

Some months later the lady sent a letter to me in London. Instead of forwarding it to me Mr. Watts kept it until I called and insisted on my immediately opening it. It had, of course, been steamed open, as all my letters through the office were at this time. It notified me that a check for $5,000 awaited me at the London agency, and that the money was to be used “for Rationalist purposes.” Watts not only offensively insisted on accompanying me to the agency but, to the disgust of the agent, demanded that the check be delivered to him. He was contemptuously ignored. I received the check, endorsed it, handed it to Mr. Watts, and left the room. All I was later supposed to get out of that check was the part of it that was called a “lecture fund” and my lectures for a year or two were paid out of it ($10 a lecture). But since I should have received the same payment if no check had been sent I clearly gained nothing from the gift. Others were more fortunate. The account was growing longer in my mind. But I was still silent.

6. POPULARIZING SCIENCE

In an earlier chapter I have explained that the tissue of medieval verbiage called philosophy of which I was a professor in the seminary included sections which we know as “Cosmology” and “Psychology.” These lured me into the field of science and into, as my old colleagues would say, the pit of infidelity. Cosmology dealt with the origin of the physical universe and those aspects of it which the X-ray eye of the metaphysicist perceives and the mere physical scientist does not. In other words, it was a superficial discussion of the physical universe in so far as it is the basis of arguments for the existence of God. The psychology was a series of statements about mind and body, little advanced beyond the opinions of Aristotle, which served as a basis for proof of the spirituality and immortality of the soul.

But from my first introduction to it as a student I felt that the physical basis of these specimens of medieval dialectic was not firm or satisfying, while my professor knew as little about science as he did about the poetry of Sappho. When one day he illustrated his point by saying that we do not even know the distance from the earth to the moon and I glared at him, as I always did when my professors blundered—“I have confessed what a little prig I then was—and told him the distance, he laughed it off by asking who had used the measuring tape. I began to look out the dim cloisteral windows for glimpses of this wonderful world of science, like a child in a puritanical home glancing across the fields at a distant circus.

When I became professor I insisted on having a few scientific books bought for our library—they were burned. I believe, when I left—and by a curious accident I made the acquaintance of an ex-Catholic, an Atheist, who had a fine scientific library, a good six-inch telescope, a beautiful binocular microscope, and other instruments. Some missionary at our church had asked me to guide him in a hunt for “bad Catholics,” and we struck this gentleman. The canon broke down in argument and said: “I see, Mr. Parker, you want a religion based upon reason but ours is based upon faith.” I was quite orthodox in Catholic philosophy when, to the astonishment of the heretic, I said: “Yours may be, canon, but mine isn’t.” It led to my spending many an hour over my friend’s microscope or scanning the heavens with him, and I was invited to lecture on astronomy in our parish hall; which
nearly closed my life at the age of 26, for after two hours bawling in an ill-suited room I caught pleurisy and got as near heaven as receiving the "last sacraments."

My colleagues, not one of whom could have told the difference between a nebula and a rotifer, were uneasy—after my lecture I overheard my superior say to the others, "But where will it all end?"—but I resumed my zealous study of science. This did not seem at first to affect my creed, and I once amused Mrs. Huxley by telling her that I devoted a whole novena (nine days) of prayer for the conversion of her late husband. The works of our one Catholic scientist, Professor St. George Mivart, who had not at that time disclosed his profound heresies, were presented by him to our library—he often visited us—and were "safe" reading. We met at his club after I quit the church, and he tacitly admitted that he had little religious belief. When I took charge of the small college in the country I got a 4½-inch telescope, a microscope (which I used for 20 years), and a large number of scientific works.

The result was that, although I made little further progress during the two unsettled years after quitting the Church, I had a large and varied store of scientific knowledge when, in 1900, I was invited to translate Haeckel's "Riddle of the Universe." The lively discussion that ensued all over Britain gave me a new zeal for the study of science, and in my defense of him ("Haeckel's Critics Answered") I was able to reply effectively to his scientific as well as his theological critics. Sir Oliver Lodge sent me a most courteous invitation to cross swords with him, and I began to correspond with a number of professors.

The idea of evolution put a vertebral column and a spinal cord into what had hitherto been my loose collection of scientific facts, and I began to organize it and fill up the deficiencies. I made a thorough study of the contents of the Geological Museum and the old Jermyn Street Museum, covered every foot of the collections of comparative zoology and prehistoric science—which fascinated me above all others—and through the friendliness of Sir Arthur Keith was enabled to study anatomy in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. Haeckel sent me all his books, with honoring inscriptions, and I spent a week with him in Jena and received a generous gift of microscopic slides. Haeckel, by the way, detested hypocrisy as much as I did, and he gave me a letter he had received from a prominent British Rationalist, a "friend" of mine, who told him that my translations of his works were bad and he would be glad to take over the job. He thought it was lucrative, but in fact I had as I said, received only $100 for my translation of the "Riddle" (which sold hundreds of thousands of copies) and the American rights to my translation were sold next day for $100, of which I had no share. A few years later my friend Fisher Unwin, the publisher, showed me a similar letter from a well-known Congregationalist divine about two translations of Eucken which he had begged me to do. Another publisher showed me a letter from Professor Bury... But more of this sort of experience later.

My gleanings in the fields of science—in virtually all fields except mathematics and chemistry—were now directed by the guiding idea of evolution, and each new fact found its place in the conception of reality or "philosophy of life" which replaced the archaic philosophy of my monastic days. A richly positive knowledge replaced the meager bunch of negations in virtue of which I had quit the church. I sketched the outline of this as early as 1903 in my defense of Haeckel, even stressing the evolution of the atoms from, as I said, "ether or whatever the prothyl may turn out to be." At that time physicists uniformly defined energy as an abstraction or "the capacity of matter to do work," and it was not so much by a discovery as by a change of meaning that it came in this century to be put on the same level of reality as matter. Haeckel, in fact, though by no means a physicist, gave matter and energy equal reality as two aspects of the fundamental stuff of the
universe before radium was discovered. Thus the way in which Jeans and Eddington fooled Britain—they had little influence in America—into believing that Haeckel and "the materialists of the 19th century" had regarded atoms as ultimate and not composite particles was pitiful. It was an ironic reflection on public instruction and on the lamentable reluctance of the proper scientific authorities to speak out when it was supposed that the interests of religion were concerned. It was the same with Sir James Jeans's attempt to prove that the universe had a beginning and was therefore created. Not only did Jeans not believe in the existence of a material universe but his argument was 50 years old. Yet the work of the Rationalists in Britain was so poor—all my own work went to America—that Jeans and Eddington held the field for 10 years, and large numbers still follow them.

For this view of nature as a vast evolving whole in which the hundred-million years of the life of our solar system, including the incident of planetary and organic evolution, are just a pulse-beat in a process of the suns of which we see no beginning and no end, I must refer to my books. I have here only to explain to inquiring readers why and how I devoted so large a proportion of my time to science. The evolution of man was the central theme of my studies at this time, and, while I was impelled to carry the inquiry further and further back into abysses of astronomical time, I was still more eager to press onward to a close study of prehistoric archaeology, of which rich museum collections were available, to a broader conception and more extensive knowledge of general history, and to sociology and economics and a lively interest in the social struggle that began in the 18th century and has entered upon so interesting a phase in our own time. As, except during a summer holiday or when I was traveling, I always worked, and still work, seven days a week, it is hardly surprising that in 50 years I was able to acquire a considerable and varied knowledge. Not having the requirements of an academic position or a specialist—except on religion and all knowledge that bears upon religion—to consider, I could ignore all facts that were not relevant to my purpose, and I soon evolved a technique. When I entered a new field or part of a field—a biographical study or a problem of science—I first mastered a good primer of it, then filled in the framework from larger books. The dissipated practice of reading, say, a book on oceanography one day and on Ming porcelain the next never appealed to me.

It is, of course, absurd to suggest that I ever professed to be more than a camp-follower of science, though I might claim a few modest discoveries. I was the first to draw attention to the curious, perhaps significant, fact that Ice Ages came at intervals which are shortened by 50 percent as the earth grows older; and, while geologists were still vacillating between various theories of the cause of an Ice Age I firmly selected the rise of the land, which is now the general opinion. I so stressed the influence of the Ice Age on the advance of life that geologists, one of them told me, said that I "had Ice Ages on the brain." A good many of them have today. I was the first writer on the evolution of civilization to point out that the main factor of social progress is the friendly contact of different minds or of bodies of men with differing cultures. I resisted the excessive claims for heredity that were generally accepted in the earlier part of this century, when even an able man like Karl Pearson said that "no amount of education will change the proportion of good and evil in the zygote" (fertilized ovum), the poor fallacy of "the Jukes family" seduced academic minds, and the cry that "Darwinism is dead" was heard even in meetings of the British Association. I have lived to see the balance of emphasis between heredity and environment restored; in fact, shifted preponderantly to environment in the new science of social psychology.

This may help to give a reader some confidence in the general soundness of my writings on science, but it is enough for me that, considering the immense range of the territory I have covered and
the multitude of my critics, a paltry number of errors have been detected. It is amusing that one of the most flagrant, though obviously not due to ignorance, passed undetected. In my translation of Haeckel’s “Last Words on Evolution” there is a drawing of the skeletons of man and the four large apes. To that I have given the title “The Five Anthropoid Apes,” though I give also the label “Man” to the first skeleton. I have lived to see even some of my early scientific and at that time supercilious critics confounded. In a manual of physics which I wrote for the general public in 1925 I predicted a time when you would see your distant friend on a glass screen while you spoke to him on the telephone. A reviewer in Nature was scornful about this wild assumption of a “popularizer.” Perhaps he has lived to see the combination of television and the sound-track or telephone today.

Generally I found that my work of putting scientific facts and truths before the public in language experts found it difficult to use was appreciated by scientific men. During one of my Australian tours, as I have said, the officials of a Pan-Pacific Congress suggested that I should give a model popular lecture for these representatives of American, Japanese, and Australian science. Some went further. Sir Michael Sadler, the distinguished (and religious) educationist once surprised me by his appreciation of my work. When I observed that I was not a specialist, he said: “But synthesis is just as important as analysis.” When I published my “Riddle of the Universe Today” in 1934, Professor Elliot Smith, one of the leading anatomists in Britain, wrote to the publishers:

“Mr. Joseph McCabe has had an inspiration of genius in adopting as a centenary celebration of the great author of ‘The Riddle of the Universe’ the submission of that work to the test of present-day knowledge. Moreover he has the wide and exact learning and the powers of lucid and decisive expression to make his survey of the modern writings that so strikingly corroborate the general accuracy of Haeckel’s views a work of fascinating interest and illumination to all intelligent readers. I am glad to possess this volume.”

As Professor Elliot Smith was probably the highest British authority on the evolution of man and a high authority on prehistoric man his opinion was of different value from that of the junior American professors who airily assure their pupils that I write on too many subjects to be accurate on any. I may add here the estimate of another brilliant man of science, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, who wrote in the Rationalist Annual for 1947:

“I am much more likely to learn to think clearly by detecting fallacies in the works of Joseph McCabe than in those of C. S. Lewis. For one thing they are a lot fewer. For another, I think most of Mr. McCabe’s general conclusions are true, and I want other people to think so. Therefore I should like all Mr. McCabe’s arguments to be correct; and if I can find a hole in one of them, it will make it easier for me to find holes in my own.”

I fancy that my friend Professor Haldane in hinting at my few errors (as he says) means mainly that my refusal to subscribe to Dialectical Materialism occasionally leads me astray. I am not an opponent of Communism, and I have for years fought for its right to the same respectful consideration as any other creed, but I do not—I believe Marx did not—like the Hegelian terminology of Dialectical Materialism. I reach a Socialist conclusion in a different way, and I do not for a moment admit that the evolutionary process is more dynamic, as Lenin claimed, in that philosophy than as I conceive it.

I have again outrun my story, but to describe my life and work year by year would require a lengthy and rather tedious narrative. I have never kept a diary, but my shabby little book of lecture-engagements goes back to 1902 and reminds me how I became a popularizer of science. In 1904 I translated Haeckel’s “Wonders of Life” and went
deeper into biology. The attitude of some of the lesser scientific men was well illustrated by one of them, Dr. Saleeby, who, quoting from this book a few years later, said that he was quoting Haeckel’s “Wunderleben”; a crude blunder—the German title is “Die Lebenswunder”—which betrayed that he did not know German and was using my translation. In 1905 I translated Haeckel’s big two-volume work “The Evolution of Man” (the title I gave it). It is richly illustrated, and I was asked to use it for a lantern lecture. I confess again that the work is not well translated or, on account of its technical character—Haeckel was a good Greek scholar and coined hundreds of scientific names and words, as well as a good artist illustrating his own work—likely to be widely read, but the previous success of the “Riddle,” the interest of the subject, and the hundreds of illustrations gave it a large circulation. I was pressed to lecture on it.

By that time I had delivered hundreds of lectures, but I was so ignorant of the technique of lecturing with stereopticon (lantern) views that I did not know that the illustrations in the book could be photographed and slides made from the negatives. With the aid of an amateur artist I got a collection of crude pictures and prepared a lecture which today (on account of the superb photography of the screen) would drive the audience from the room; especially as in my youthful zeal for logic I “began at the beginning” and showed folk diagrams of weird beasties from microbes to worms. But such was the interest in the kind of society for which I then lectured—Rationalist, Secularist, Socialist, or Ethical—that it filled the halls or schools to capacity.

In the next few years I prepared and delivered a series of four lectures on the Evolution of the Universe, of Life, of Man, of Mind, of Morals, and of Civilization, chiefly for the Rationalist Association. Repeatedly I took the 200 slides, or half or more of them, on long journeys over Britain or Australia, and once over Canada, California, and (as baggage which I could not shed) across Mexico, Yucatan and Cuba. The expenses allowed did not include taxis or meals in the restaurant cars, and the meager fee ($10 a lecture) did not permit me to indulge. Friends urged that I was shortening my life. They are all dead. And these were the minority of my lectures. I prepared large numbers of lectures on great literature, social questions, and so on. There were a few societies—chiefly in Scotland, let me say—which gave me the net profit of the lecture, which was often high, but there were other cases of desperate propagandist ventures, 200 miles from London, where the treasurer would, with a long face, produce a collection of less than $5 and ask me how much of it I expected for fee and expenses. Over and over again I was out of pocket.

The chief lecture agency in London was attracted and put me on its list. For this purpose I put together a series of restorations, largely colored, of scenes in the earth’s past, and it was one of the most successful lectures on the agent’s list for several years. I skated rapidly and skilfully, joking like a conjurer, over the thin ice that lay between the Tertiary apes and prehistoric man. Once when I gave the lecture at a highly respectable college for young ladies somewhere in Connecticut, a sharp-eyed pupil took me to task for the “disgraceful” way in which I had darted over the ice. I gave it a week later in a New York slum, in a dingy living room, at the request of Leonard D. Abbott, and most of the children slumbered happily. I gave it (to the public) in several university halls, in a large private mental hospital, and in more than one church. At York the archbishop’s family sat in the front row. In a Congregationalist chapel the chairman, a rich patron who knew much more about wine than about Joseph McCabe or his subject, assured the audience, to its huge delight, that tonight they were going to hear some genuine science, not this atheistic stuff. Once I was invited to give it to a convivial club of businessmen in Glasgow, and a friend privately warned me that they intended to dine and intoxicate me before the lecture. I grasped the opportunity and said
that only a bottle of good champagne would have any effect on me. I got it, but with that and two intervals for refreshment and a stirrup cup... But the experience that stands out highest was when a gray old elder of the Kirk was persuaded to hear it in northern Scotland. "It was a gran' lecture," he said afterwards. "Of course," he added, "it was a pack o' lees, but it was a gran' lecture."

But, as Bernard Shaw said to me, folk smelled sulphur wherever I went, and this section of my work gradually failed. The agent, like my literary agent, demanded that I should abandon all controversial work. I declined, and they abandoned me. I had for some time tried a compromise by lecturing on the ancient civilizations, with lantern views (largely restorations and copies of classical paintings), and for this purpose I made lengthy pilgrimages to the ancient ruins. I had visited Rome and studied its rich monuments in 1905, when I attended the Freethinkers' Congress. In 1922 I made the long journey across Europe to Athens and Crete, but that is worth a page of description in a later chapter. In 1925, during the dictatorship of General de Rivera, I ventured again, camera in hand, into Spain, and my long-standing interest in the old Arab (falsely called Moorish) civilization was quickened into enthusiasm at sight of the few splendid monuments of it—the ruins at Toledo and Seville, the Great Mosque and the Bridge at Cordova, the Alhambra at Granada—that the vandalism of the Spanish Catholics had spared; and I afterwards devoured all the works of the Liberal Spanish professors, now as dead as their Liberalism in Spain, who, being masters of Arabic, had learned and told all the facts about this great civilization. It deepened my sense of grievance against modern historical scholarship that it fosters the almost universal superstition about the restoration of civilization in Europe by the Church by, from fear of offending the churches, slighting or ignoring what was clearly its main inspiration. With great interest, too, I visited and spent many days amongst the relics of America's original civilization in Mexico and Yucatan, but of the quaint experiences of that pilgrimage I will speak later.

This last tour was in 1925, and from my photographs and borrowed pictures I prepared the usual lecture. By that time, however, my heavy lecturing work was drawing to a close, as I will explain later. Here I may confine myself to that purveying of science to the general public to which I devoted so much of my earlier public life. My interest in science was, as I said, first excited by the bearing of the teaching of so many branches of science on philosophy and religion. At that time, 50 years ago, nine-tenths of churchgoers and their writers scornfully rejected the truth of evolution, though only a few old men—in science, Wallace (for Spiritualist reasons), Virchow (for political reasons), etc.—still professed to dissent, wholly or in part, from the general agreement of the scientific authorities in the many branches of science which bore upon it. In fact, it is hardly too much to say that four-fifths of religious believers (which includes all Catholics) still profess to ridicule this consensus of the world's experts on the subject. My work lay with the general public, not with experts and not with small and advanced minorities in the various churches, and I had to cover the entire field from astronomy to prehistoric archaeology and dip into sciences in which I had otherwise little interest. I realized, for instance, that the system of philosophy I had taught contained, in its zeal to dig a wide gulf between the material and the immaterial, the old argument that the organism creates substances (sugar, perfumes, dyes, etc.) which not even the most skilful chemist can make in the laboratory. This, I now found, had been done 40 years earlier, yet similar arguments about the natural origin of life are still used in the religious world. Other sciences, psychology, prehistoric archaeology, etc., had to be mastered in order to be able to examine thoroughly all arguments in connection with the nature of the mind.

But in using this scientific material for controversial purposes I
discovered that I had some facility for making the facts of science clear to the general public and, as from the start I had determined to get most of my income apart from my Rationalist work, I became, as a normal part of my work, a popularizer of science; and it amuses me to record how even the religious public, a large part of whom knew what my real interest in science was, so long tolerated me in this field. In some places, especially when speaking for the old Sunday Lecture Societies, I had audiences of 1,000 to 3,000 people. The cinema was not yet a serious rival, and there were hundreds of series of lectures arranged every year.

On science I was for many years, I think, the most popular lecturer, and the chief reason was that I spoke a language that the people understood. I had two types of rivals. One was the cheap professional or amateur lecturer who generally feels that by sprinkling a number of technicalities over his speech he proves his knowledge of the subject; the other the expert who, besides being so often a bad and tiresome speaker, finds it impossible to avoid the technical phrases in which he thinks. Some of these men occasionally dropped a word of disdain about “the mere popularizer”—quite clearly in some cases because they coveted what they believed to be the profit of the work—and affected to believe that there was no education in my method. On the contrary, there was none in theirs, with a few exceptions. Whenever they came out, as they did every few minutes, with some unfamiliar technical phrase or name, the minds of the hearers, even if they explained it, were held up in irritation and the continuity of attention was broken. With my method I did contrive to give a totally inexpert audience some valuable truths of science. Experts have done much to kill the former popularity of the scientific lecture.

My work was, of course, not confined to lectures. Apart from the mass of scientific facts in my controversial works I was invited to write small manuals of astronomy, physics, geology, etc. I may claim that few errors in them were pointed out even by friendly experts who wrote me. When H. G. Wells launched his famous “Outline of History” and had so wonderful a circulation, the publisher asked him to write “An Outline of Science.” He told them that I was the only man who could write such a book, and we signed a contract and I wrote the first four parts of it. But before any of the work went to press the late Sir Arthur Thomson approached the publisher ... In short, so many difficulties and unpleasantnesses were now put in my way that I had to accept a small compensation and retire. It was part of the compensation that I was to remain the scientific contributor to a certain well-known weekly. I so remained for a month, and Thomson then took my place.

7. MY WORK IN HISTORY

“How many books have you written?” is a question that is so frequently put to me that the readers of this autobiographical sketch will surely expect the answer. I so frequently make the remark that at least half of the books that are published in our time ought to have been sent to the guillotine instead of the printing machine that I shall not be suspected of boasting if I say that I have written more than 200 works myself, which is probably more than any other living author. I will not make the excuse that many were small because many also were large—one, “The Key to Culture,” runs to 1,200,000 words, several to more than half a million—but, I may plead this extenuating feature that I have, especially in the last 30 years, rarely written a book which some publisher had not demanded, and that, in order to reduce the enormity of my crime, I am counting a series of small books (50 Little Blue Books, 50 Self Educator Series, 20 A.B.C. Library, and 17 “Hundred Men Who Moved the World”) as one book each.
More important are the themes of the books. Apart from the series of small works in which I endeavor to give the reader a simple account of the meaning of some modern movement, invention, or theory—in which I serve, frankly, as just an interpreter or a peddler in culture—far more of my books are devoted to history (including biography) than to any other subject, and my controversial works contain much more history than science. Scientific men would shudder, and I would smile, at any wild proposal that I should lecture on science in a university, but Columbia University did me the honor of inviting me to lecture in its Historical School, on the beginning of scientific thought in the Middle Ages; and when Professor Shotwell, of that school, was first commissioned to draft a large scheme of translations of medieval documents he asked me to cooperate, though the editing passed to other men, some of them Catholics. With my customary malice I may add that when my friend Shotwell asked me to name another possible British collaborator and I (rather insincerely) suggested Belloc he replied, with an air of pain: "Oh, come, McCabe—we regard you as an historian."

I no more regard myself as entitled to that honorable name than to the name of scientist, for my work in both branches of culture has always been just to convey to the general reader the socially important facts and truths which the experts establish. But I have made a deeper and more extensive study of history than of science. History is, in fact, to me the continuation, besides sociology, comparative religion, and ethics, of the story which science in the ordinary sense carries forward from the birth of the earth to the end of the Neolithic and the Bronze Ages. It is science. Science reconstructs the past from its footprints in the rocks: history interprets and restores the more recent past from the handprints of man in the manuscripts or books he has written and the buildings he has raised. And, while the interpretative work of the scientist requires an elaborate training and technique, the sources of historical knowledge were available to me in the vast National Library in London and in the ruined cities, temples and palaces I visited in many lands. I concluded, after reading a large number of works on European history by American professors, that I had read at least 10 times as much of ancient Roman, medieval, and post-medieval source-documents (in five or six languages) than any of them has done.

Let me, again indulging my malicious disposition, give you an illustration. Some five or six years ago I complied with an invitation of the British Rationalist Association to write a Rationalist Encyclopedia. In their great concern for accuracy the authorities invited a number of men to read my manuscript and correct errors. One of the first, a professor, candidly told me that as I knew 10 times as much about the matter as he, I need expect no suggestions from him. Other professors and critics (including at least one cleric) were more ambitious. As the work was from the nature of the case mainly historical and none of them knew much about history their amateurish suggestions made me a little impatient, and possibly I crossed many of them out rather rudely. They returned valiantly, apparently armed with microscopes, to the task... In short, there was finally sent to me in a couple of years, with great firmness, a paper containing about 70 pages of mature corrections. While I accepted the corrections of a few trifling errors (dates, etc.)—I had not yet seen proofs of the work—I had the pleasure of pointing out that they had, doubtless at considerable cost, made 10 times as many mistakes in 70 pages as I had made in 700; they were more serious mistakes.

Not one of these was an expert historian, but it has been to me a no less irritating experience to find even distinguished historians, when they make excursions from their own fields or when even in their own fields they allow their religious or political opinions to influence their judgment, committing blunders far greater than any of which I have
ever been accused. Lately Professor Arnold Toynbee, who is a master of
universal history and has written probably the most learned historical
work since Gibbon, has been in high honor in the American academic
world. Yet every professor of history who flattered him knows that his
vast historical lore is used by him to support a thesis which they would
consider foolish and superficial in any other writer: the thesis that re-
ligion has not only no call to promote what most of us call civilization
but that collapses of world-civilization, like that at the fall of the Ro-
man Empire, are always followed by advance of religion and therefore
the present threat of the collapse of civilization should not disturb us.
Not even a plausible case for so weird a conception can be made out by a
candid statement of historical facts. This might be called an amiable
diversion of an otherwise able historian, but one effect of it is that it
vitiates in a most important respect his great work on the causes of
historical advance and retrogression, on which he is supposed to be the
best authority. The modern reader looks to his book especially for some
light on the controversy about the share of religion in these ebbs and
flows of civilization. He finds none because Toynbee does not consider
that it is the function of religion to promote civilization. He does not
give prominence to this thesis in his large work. You have to look for its
development in a small and out-of-print work, the Burge Lecture.

I may give one more example since it concerns a man of equal dis-
tinction in culture and of equally charming and high character. Pro-
fessor Gilbert Murray is one of the leading Hellenists of our time and
therefore no slight authority on the history of Greece. But in recent
publications he has expressed dogmatic and most mischievous opinions
on great modern events like the French and the Russian Revolutions:
options which betray a lamentable ignorance of the historical facts
and a bitter political prejudice instead of conscientious research. On the
Bolshevik Revolution he has, apparently, blindly followed the partisan
history of Lancelot Lawton, which makes the Bolshevik leaders murder
1,275 Russian archbishops and bishops whereas there were—see the
Catholic Encyclopedia—not more than 75 in the Russian Empire and all
but one or two escaped. They were all traitors to the republic, anyway,
as any man of common sense would expect. Any conscientious historian
will find—indeed most of our standard works like the Cambridge His-
tory do find—that a study of the 50 or so revolutions in Europe since
1789 proves that the widespread legend that popular revolutions are
bloody and the counter-revolutions marked by a serene concern for law
and order rather than savagery is the reverse of the historical truth.
Yet Murray and other scholars sustain the popular lie. "All revolutions
are full of horrors and inhumanities," he writes in his "Myths and
Ethics," and "the Russian Revolution was worse than others." The whole
book—originally a lecture at which the historian Professor J. A. K.
Thomson genially took the chair—bases its political argument upon
historical untruths.

Naturally it is far worse when scientific men wander into history,
or those parts of history which are involved in the popular Christian
version of it. Some time after the Russian Revolution the British weekly,
Nature, one of the most solid scientific periodicals in any language, had
an editorial article appealing to scientific men to support religion on
the basis of just such flagrant historical untruths as I have quoted from
Murray. A few years ago Sir Richard Gregory, leading British scientist,
said in a lecture and afterwards wrote, apropos of the supposed decay
of character in our irreligious age:

"In the age of chivalry, of the 11th to the 14th centuries, duty
to noble service gave refinement to the character of the warrior.
Love, honor, loyalty, and piety were esteemed as major virtues, and
courtesy, courage, obedience, and respect for women as minor."

Sir Richard would have been outraged if my friend Lord Snell, who took
the chair for him, had recommended the flat-earth theory, yet it is not
further from the truth in astronomy than Gregory’s statements about
life in the mythical Age of Chivalry are from the findings of every single
high historical authority on the period. And it is not immaterial to add
that both Murray’s and Gregory’s lectures were delivered to audiences of
highly educated Rationalists who strongly appreciated them and
most of whom regard me as an “extreme” person.

I could write a large book on such blunders in contemporary works
that are invariably treated by reviewers with deep respect, but these
instances of recent date will suffice. My American readers will have
found scores of such instances from the works of American professors
in my books. And since in all these cases the writers have been induced
by their regard for religion or fear of offending religious bodies to make
this wide departure from the first ethical canon of science, any reader
who has not hitherto understood will now appreciate why I have all my
life given preponderant attention to history. It is needless to add that I
assume that it never occurred to scholars like Murray and Gregory to
doubt for a moment the truth of the statements they took from the
stream of conventional beliefs. I am merely illustrating that a general
and accurate instruction in history is as urgently required as in science,
economics, or social questions.

I am tempted to give one further illustration. A year ago Dr. Gilbert
Murray wrote an article in one of the magazines with the title “Our
Age of Lying.” He is a man of sensitive and high character and hates
lies, yet he had in the previous year strongly supported and urged his
fellow Rationalists to support the imposition, by a new law, of definite
Christian lessons on the children in all the schools of Britain, on the
ground that this helps to guide and guard character. The truth is that
wherever statistics are available, as they are in the case of a number of
British and American cities and a number of countries like Eire, pre-
war Poland, and Italy, they yield exactly the opposite result. It will, in
fact, help the reader further to understand my rebellious frame of mind
that while the whole press and periodical literature of Britain discussed
this beneficent action of religious lessons not one single writer or
speaker inquired, by consulting the statistics, whether in point of fact
religious lessons do check crime and juvenile delinquency; and Ration-
alisms themselves instead of publishing the statistics—they refused to
publish a small work in which I give these for Eire—agreed to the im-
position of lessons in the schools provided there were lessons on other
religions as well as the Christian.

I had been professor of ecclesiastical history as well as philosophy
in the small clerical college in which I had taught, and I was no stranger
to that field of culture, but I began serious work in it only with my
“Peter Abelard” and “St. Augustine and His Age,” which passed through
several British and American editions. But I then, as I have stated, be-
came especially occupied with Rationalist work and read extensively
both recent historians and the original literature. In the British Na-
tional Library (British Museum) one large section of the reference
shelves is given up to the hundreds of fat quarto volumes of the Migne
(Benedictine) collection of the Latin and Greek Fathers or of all Chris-
tian writings known (in the 18th century) from the first to the 13th
century. Apart from clerical professors no reader has spent so many days
as I have during the last 50 years in that cloisteral corner of the great
library.

We rarely speak of “discoveries” in history—I have never envied the
bliss of the professor who has discovered a new coin of Cleopatra or the
manuscript of a few lines of some forgotten work—but I unearthed large
numbers of facts that modern historians ought to and do not take into
account. When, a few years ago, I lay dangerously ill and delirious I
muttered, my good housekeeper tells me, “Thomas a Becket—poor old
Thomas” over and over again. In the week before I contracted pneumonia I had found in the Migne collection the last letter in which the archbishop described his situation. It is barely mentioned—again, I submit, because such mention would be “offensive to Catholics”—in any one of the classic histories of England yet it completely discredits the conventional account of the murder in Canterbury Cathedral in the year 1170. I have translated the letter in my recent “Testament of Christian Civilization” (1946). Don’t blame the King, Becket tells the Pope, but “those priests of Baal, those sons of false prophets... the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London”! It was chiefly a quarrel with them about property that endangered his life.

It is not too much to say that the entire history of Europe ought to be rewritten with a strict regard to the historical facts, but apart from the fact that no historical specialist now covers so wide a field few could be trusted, and probably none of the few would be willing, to do the work. In ancient history my interest was limited. The broad question of the rise from barbarism to civilization fascinated me, and, I believe, before Breasted, I stressed the decisive influence of the last Ice Age; and I applied the same principles of materialistic—I have never cared to say “economic”—determination to the remarkable history of Greece. Beyond that I was mainly interested to transmit to the general public the exposure of the fraudulent history of the Hebrews, which one may now read in scores of books, and of the dreary 19th century legends about religion and morals in Babylonia and Egypt. Of late years I have paid greater attention to early Persia and the deep influence of its necessarily ascetic code (since the devil created the flesh and all matter) upon later Egypt, Babylonia, Judaism, and eventually Christianity. In all this, however, my task was simply to select the relevant facts from the large modern literature and enable the reader to form a clear and sound conception of real civilization and its codes of behavior, laying stress on the new light, which I call the False Dawn of Modern Times, which broke gradually upon the world, from Ionia to China, inspiring new forms of art and literature as well as philosophy and science, with the spread of Skepticism in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.

What academic folk think of my works ceased to interest me decades ago—I would not cross the room to read a review of one—and whether or not that philosophy of history which is unfolded in my 40 or 50 historical works is accepted in a later generation is equally a matter of complete indifference to me personally. At present I should not expect any professional historian to venture to endorse any of my leading conclusions, though there is no dispute whatever in serious history about the facts on which they are based. For instance, I claim to have established, chiefly in my “Rise and Fall of the Gods,” that it is an historical law that Atheism spreads in all ages in proportion to the growth of knowledge and of freedom to discuss it. I have supplemented this in my “Hundred Men Who Moved the World” with the evidence that of these 100 men, selected on the ground of their contributions to civilization, nearly one-half were Atheists, half the remainder Deists or Pantheists, few strict Christians, and the great majority far from chaste or spiritual. In my “Golden Ages of History” I described 15 periods which bear that title by the general verdict of historians, and I show that they were all characterized by a conspicuous spread of Skepticism; in fact, I rather strained the evidence against my thesis in order to avoid the charge of prejudice by including Christian rulers like Lorenzo and Louis XIV (whose greatness is a nauseating myth). In fine I showed in my “Splendor of Moorish Spain” (1935) that the main key to the restoration of civilization in Europe after five or six centuries of real general barbarism (adequately described in my “History of Morals,” “History of the Roman Church,” and more recent “History of the Popes”) was the brilliant Arab civilization beyond the Pyrenees, the greatest since the
Greco-Roman, the culture of which gradually penetrated the dense and coarse mind of Christian Europe.

If any reader still fails to understand my eagerness to prove such points and would remind me that this at least is a book explaining myself I remind him that the guiding principle of my life since the beginning of this century has been social service. The acquisition of knowledge over a wide field has always been the main pleasure of my life. I like a good detective or western story and read several every week. I thrill at a good football match and love to sit thinking at night before a fire with my pipe and, as long as it could be had, a glass of good beer. I like a brisk solitary country or seashore walk, increasing the pace when a hill rises before me, and I like mingling with crowds on the streets of a city. But my time has been mainly given, all my life, except the four years in which I was a little businessman in Manchester, to acquiring and transmitting knowledge, and it has never been a labor. It has been a long holiday in the sunshine, and the thought of "retiring" is almost as repugnant to me as the fear that a time may come when failing energy may impose idle days upon me. But in all this acquisition and communication of knowledge I have, since about 1900, always had a clear social aim: to stimulate men to think and to teach them such facts as, in my conviction, will help them in their search for the way to a social order without the wars, poverty, blunders, and cruelties that disgrace what we call our civilization.

And you have only to reflect that, especially in our day, we hear it on all sides described as "our Christian Civilization" to see the point of the materialism which I teach both in history and science. The phrase is, of course, hypocritical. I do not "mellow" with age, as a man of 80 is expected to do, partly because my mental vitality is as high as it was at the age of 40, but chiefly because I have seen the world pass into such an age of lying, sophistry, and casuistry as I had never known before. The phrase "our Christian Civilization" is the cloak thrown over the present form of the unscrupulous struggle to protect privilege. It gives a pretext to the Catholic Church, in particular, to ally itself with the wealthy who would again drown in blood, as an alliance of Clericalism and Feudalism repeatedly did in the last century—on that point at least the Cambridge Modern History is remarkably frank—the radical forces now embodied in Socialism (of which Communism is one form) and the U.S.S.R., which threaten the position of the privileged minority. If those who would give a sincere meaning to the phrase imagine that they can call it a "Christian civilization" in the sense that the nations which sustain it are in the majority Christian they refuse, as usual, to consider the facts. The available statistics—of these also I have made a thorough study and often published the result—show that the majority in all the leading civilizations are no longer Christians, and that their secession from the Church has grown just in the same proportion as the world has advanced. But the claim usually is that it was a Christian Europe that, mainly or at least largely stimulated and guided by the inspiration of the Church, built up our civilization, and we have therefore to beware of losing this inspiration.

My use of history has been predominantly for the purpose of discrediting that lie as an indispensable prerequisite of getting folk to see the real inspirations and guides of social progress. I have no fanatical zeal for Truth as such, though I hate lying. I generally shudder when I hear professional truth-seekers explain that they have devoted their whole lives to "the greatest of all causes," which they declare to be the "destruction of superstition." The kindly interpretation of me which some well-meaning folk offer, that either from chagrin over a misspent youth (in a monastery) or from some dark feature of temperament, I "hate" religion is melodramatic nonsense. But I could hardly express my philosophy better than in some words recently used, with a different
aim, by a journalist and literary man of the type I most loathe. Just three days before I write this I read an article in London’s most respectable evening paper, Lord Beaverbrook’s Standard, and by the most robust and bucolic representative of the Churchill school, Beverley Baxter. He was, as usual, warning folk by the awful example of atheistic Russia. The delicious irony is that after the sub-heading, “Reject God,” he went on: 

“Let us be perfectly blunt. The one nation that is making progress today is Russia.”

To any person who has open-mindedly followed the story of the U.S.S.R. since the Bolshevik Revolution and seen its people surmount the most formidable difficulties any European nation has encountered since the Thirty Years War that is a tremendous compliment, not only to the Soviet leaders but to the ideals they followed. Just when they had built up a civilization upon a desert of ruins it was shattered again, and more devastatingly than the civilization of any other European nation, yet “it is the one nation that is making progress today”!

Of course, Baxter meant that it has sold man’s heritage of spirituality for a mess of pottage, but I am weary of pointing out the fallacy of that syrupy word. If he means art, letters, and science, what nation is more devoted than the Russian to cultivating these? And in the treatment and reduction of crime and general excellence of character the Russians are at least equal to any. But the important point is that their leaders, in rejecting every religious belief, have risen from the wreckage better than any others. Whatever proportion of the nation are still Christians—the Russian Atheists themselves say 40 percent, while in England and France the proportion is not more than 20 percent—all men in the governing classes and in the body of 20,000,000 Communists that rules the rulers have rejected God and Christianity. And they make more progress than any others. The Atheist is on the positive side a Humanist, and it is when you abandon God that you really begin to learn the power of man, when you abandon heaven that you become zealous for the betterment of earth.

This is no place to explain that I came to the same conclusion as the Russians by a thorough study of the real history of Europe during the last 2,500 years. Why not, someone may ask, just construct what I claim to be the positive and veracious history of civilization without so much polemic? It would be futile. There is still in the environment of the race outside Russia, seeping into the minds of men from every editorial, radio-deliverance, and long political speech, the false and mythical version of its history. You have to discredit these myths—about the “triumph” over paganism, the early church and its legendary swarms of martyrs, the Dark Age, the Age of Chivalry, art and culture and the Middle Age, and so on—before men will candidly consider the truth. Let it not be imagined for a moment that by the truth I mean the opinion of a few Freethinkers as opposed to the general teaching of historians. Historians today, except a few second-rate or third-rate professors who play up to the religious bodies, never cover the whole history or civilization and therefore are little equipped, if they were inclined, to touch upon what they would call the delicate topic of the influence of religion. But there is no room for doubt as to what they think. When Professor Leuba made his famous confidential inquiry into the beliefs, as stated by themselves, of the leaders of culture in America he summed up this part of his results (“Belief in God and Immortality,” p. 259):

“There is little difference between the greater historians and the greater scientists; only about one-third of each believe in God. The proportions are not very different regarding immortality.”

And as we may take it for granted that those who refused to reply to his inquiry were not believers ashamed of their belief or fearing penal-
ization, the proportion of believers is less than a third. In any case in
all my works I give detached and exact references for such facts as may
startle the reader, and in cases of more serious skepticism a reference
to the original Latin or other sources.
That will be enough to explain my constant preoccupation with his-
tory. It is part of the scientific-humanist interpretation of reality, and
it discredits the false guides whose worthlessness explains where man
is today, in the sixth or seventh millennium of civilization. If any man
still feels that the legend he has heard from the infant-school onward—
that the Churches "do good," that Christianity inspired civilization, that
religion is indispensable—let him look round him. For 18 months the
most powerful of all churches, the Roman, has been poisoning the mind
of America with hatred of another great civilization and trying to drag
America into a more barbaric war than ever yet reddened this planet;
and this on top of the alliance of its supreme head for five or six years
with the supreme criminals of history who perished at Nuremberg. Look
to India where the savage clash of two other "great religions" has led
to such horrors. Look to Palestine, where the conflict of two "great re-
ligions" explains much of the barbarity of today and portends a far
worse conflict in the near future. Look to Japan, where the intimate
alliance of the fifth and sixth "great world-religions," Buddhism and
Shinto, with capitalist and imperialist thugs has brought ruin upon a
nation and desolation upon the whole eastern world. I might say look
round America, where the churches claim to have a great influence on
the dangerous policy of Washington. Look round the world, in fine, and
notice the sterile silence of the archbishops and other church-leaders
in an age that lacks guidance as man never did before...so I hope they
will give me this simple epitaph when I die: He was a rebel to his last
breath.

8. ON THE LECTURE-PLATFORM

The facts and truths of science and history fill the greater part of
my works. Indeed these and their relation to religious beliefs may be
said to occupy almost entirely the works I have published in America
through E. Haldeman-Julius in the last 20 years. Apart from the general
summary of knowledge ("Key to Culture") and a few booklets on ques-
tions of the day these sum up my work. It amuses me to hear at times
how some discussion on the campus has been heavily closed by the as-
surance of some junior professor that I write on too many things to be
accurate. I repeat that that would give a glorious opportunity, of which
they do not seem to have availed themselves, to my numerous clerical
critics. But my habitual readers understand. Even in science and his-
tory I, unlike the professor, who has to know the year in which some
royal criminal or plious character died, to be able to tell the hybrid Greek
and Latin names of obscure species of insects or of Mesozoic reptiles,
select my facts. They must have relevance to the meaning and guidance
of life. Beyond this I have studied only such elements in economics
and sociology, such outstanding events in the world of art and letters,
as I needed to form my own judgment.

In addition I have translated about 30 books from German, French,
Spanish, Latin, or Italian, and I have published a few anonymous or
pseudonymous works or written books for other men. Five or six years
ago my British publishers suggested that, as my name was anathema, I
might write a few books under a pseudonym. I chose to translate my
Irish name into English and masqueraded for a year as Martin Abbot-
son; and the experiment was a complete failure. For another publisher
I once translated or rather made a little book or a series of booklets,
guides to opera-goers, on Wagner's Ring; and I had the satisfaction of
hearing musical friends, who regard me as a philistine because I prefer Handel to Stravinsky, warmly recommend these anonymous guides. I helped the bluff Sir Hiram Maxim to compile—rather, I compiled for him—his "Li Hung Chang's Scrap Book." But my most extensive work of this kind was to write nearly all the works to which my friend Bishop William Montgomery Brown put his name.

It was an open secret, for Bill was a fine man but no scholar and the bishops of the Episcopal Church never believed that he wrote the learned books that he hurled at them year after year. It chanced that I was in America on the eve of his trial for heresy in 1924, and he invited me to spend a week with him in Galion. I wrote a defense for him, but he had a number of other counsel, some with fantastic ideas of strategy. When reporters told him that if he had confined himself to the paper which I had written for him the bishops could hardly have condemned him, he asked for my assistance on a much more extensive scale. He pleaded that it was largely through reading my books that he had become a heretic and he was entitled to my help. He offered me the appointment of (paid) literary secretary and I wrote practically all that he published from 1924 to 1937, including "Science and History for Boys and Girls," which was, he told me, translated into Russian and used in the Soviet schools. At times he made alterations in or additions to the manuscripts, always for the worse, but I was content with his promise that my authorship of the books would be disclosed at his death. It was in fact left to me to disclose it, which I promptly did.

Brown's position and personality puzzled Americans. We became close friends, and at one time or other I spent weeks with him in Galion or during his visits to Chicago. Shortly before his death he was invited to read a paper at the Congress of Religions there, and it was loudly applauded. I had written it. I went with him one day to a Women's Club to which he lectured. Sitting with me was the chief Unitarian preacher of Chicago, Bradley, and he listened with astonished appreciation until I whispered to him that I had written the speech. There was little difference between the bishop's creed and mine. His "God," and he gradually quit using the word, was just "whatever good there is in man"; and he went beyond me in denying that there had ever been such a person as Jesus. His chief tenet, that the phrases of the Christian theology might be used as emotional symbols of human truths—the Holy Ghost was science, and so on—was innocuous. He did not for a moment say, as the Modernists do, that these symbolic meanings are in the formulae but that the Christian phrases could be used to express them, just as we use the word salvation in many senses.

He was always shy of discussing this point with me or of explaining why he, in some back room in Chicago—probably at heavy expense—got a wandering prelate from some eastern branch of the Catholic Church to make him a bishop when he lost his American title. He was a man of the finest character. A rich and pious lady who had paid for his clerical education left him her large fortune, and I fancy that he wanted to be loyal to her memory. He and his wife lived, without a servant, in his large house in Galion—many a time I have seen Bill bent over the stove cooking his supper—so that practically the whole of the money should be applied to the cause (and to Communism). What became of it I do not know. Bill assured me that he had provided that I should continue to write the books, now under my own name, which were sold cheap or given away, after his death, but I could not get even the $100 or so he owed me at the time of his death. It was something that through him I had placed a score of books and booklets applying science and history to religion in the hands of a large section of the American public whom I should otherwise never have reached.

I had found myself in time just as fluent with tongue as with pen, but here again the insinuation that I turned against the Church a skill
that it had given me is ill-founded. We younger preachers had to write out our sermons, submit them to our "superior," and learn them by heart. More than once I saw the ladies beneath the pulpit start with apprehension when, in my nervousness, I momentarily lost my "lines," and there was no prompter in the wings. Before I quit the Church I could not speak for 10 minutes without this elaborate preparation. I have all my life tried as far as possible to avoid speaking without some hours of preparation, except when it was repeating a lecture. In my early lecturing days, in fact, my notes often ran to several pages, and, if it were not a lantern lecture on science, I wrote out and memorized a few purple patches to insert here and there. Almost always I covered a half-sheet of paper with an outline of the lecture, heavily scoring the main points to meet my eye, though in time I used no notes on the platform. At one place I heard one official say to another, "McCabe's lost his notes," and the reply, "Good God, do you mean he's lost his head?"

Most of the stories of speakers who could stand up and make brilliant or witty speeches without preparation are apocryphal or greatly exaggerated. My friend Robert Gladstone told me that his uncle, the famous statesman, used to spend hours stretched on a couch preparing a speech; though he was a slow speaker. The level of political speaking has fallen low since those days, except in the case of Churchill, who spends three or four days in the preparation of an important speech and must memorize a good deal of it. Ingersoll's daughter, my good friend Mrs. Ingersoll-Brown, told me that her father did not prepare the vibrant emotional passages which add so much to the charm of his speeches, but I fancy that her memory was at fault. The passages in the published speeches show considerable polish in comparison with the verbatim reports in the papers at the time they were delivered. A janitor once gave away that brilliant popular lecturer on science, Professor Tyndall. He found him in the afternoon before a lecture practicing a little trick: "accidentally" knocking a book off the table and vaulting over—he was a good Alpine climber—to pick it up. But this must have been in Tyndall's early years, for he was a serious and conscientious man.

There is, in short—if the reader will not take the word in an ugly sense—a seamy side to the tapestry of good public speaking. I once heard Chesterton, whom I was to oppose, explain to an audience that he had only had time to put together a few notes in his taxi. The speech was published verbatim in his next volume of essays. For my part I never regarded speaking as an art but a means of communicating knowledge: and in some respect the best means, for one can pack more knowledge into an hour's talk and imprint it more effectively than in many pages of a book. Discussing the point once with a lady, I found that her ideal lecturer was the Secularist leader Foote because, she said, "he never says anything that we don't know." Doubtless that was a clumsy way of expressing her appreciation. My own idea was that I would never mount a platform unless I felt that I could tell the audience something that they did not know, putting what little art or grace I could into the telling. This, indeed, enabled me to overcome the nervousness I felt at first—good speakers have admitted to me that they never overcome it—before mounting the platform. I exorcized it by reminding myself that I knew more about the subject than my audience did.

After the first few perspiring experiments in extemporizing I soon became a fluent and rapid speaker, but a friend sent me to take six lessons from a famous professor of elocution. At the first lesson he began to tell me the difference between vowels and consonants, and with my usual readiness I asked him to tell me something that I did not know. There were no lessons, but he was a good fellow and, after hearing me reel off a bit of my latest lecture, he gave me a valuable counsel. My delivery had the common fault: it was monotonous. "Look at that
picture," he said, pointing to the wall. "Certain figures stand out—the rest is background." I improved, though I have never regarded myself as a lecturer of any distinction. It is the message that matters. "Well, what do you think about the question now?" one man was heard to ask another after one of my lectures. "I don't know," he replied. "You see, McCabe is such a convincing beggar that I always take time before I allow myself to be convinced by him." He referred, I hope, to the matter rather than the manner of my speeches.

From earlier adventures that I have described it will be apparent that I have lectured in every type of room to every kind of audience: millionaires' drawing rooms and hobo colleges, universities and in a mental hospital (mostly to melancholics, including once a famous poet), theological colleges and giddy social clubs, slum dwellings and stately mansions, the saloons of liners (once hanging on to a column in a wild storm—and to a thin house), theatres, churches, schools, public baths, parks (to many thousand people), miners' club rooms, etc. I have lectured, impromptu, in Latin and (in a Paris congress) in French. My lectures, naturally, included many on the Church of Rome, but I have rarely had disturbances. Once I arrived at a town (Wigan) in the north of England and was met by a dejected group who said that, as the Catholics had threatened a riot, the chief of police had forbidden the lecture (on science). I went at once to the chief's house and—well, he came himself to the lecture, which, he told me, he greatly enjoyed. The 20 reserve police in a nearby building were not called out, and I became quite a popular lecturer in the town. Once in Sydney, when I advertised a reply to the cardinal who (knowing that I was 2,000 miles away) had criticized me from his pulpit, a Catholic wrote me, piously, that if I gave that lecture I would "leave either my bones or my balls in Australia." My friends were alarmed and, against my will two tall detectives escorted me to the hall. I should loathe to count all the lectures entered in my little book since 1902 but as I see that for at least 20 years I gave 150 to 200 a year, including tours, the total must be well over 4,000.

Once only in the half-century have I missed a lecture through illness (gastric influenza), though I have lectured sitting and sipping brandy on the platform or with my head and hands (after a touch of anthrax) heavily bandaged. It was often arduous work, and the pay was generally small. One Saturday morning I was in Southport, 200 miles from London, when I heard that there was a strike and all trains were cancelled. I was advertised to give two lectures in Wigan next day and one in London on the Monday. Packing my baggage for mail, I set out with my lantern slides and a toothbrush and, getting what little aid from street cars that I could, walked (15 miles) to Wigan. At 8 p.m. on Sunday, after two heavy lectures, I took a chain of street cars from town to town for 20 miles and reached Manchester about midnight. The police told me that there was not a room available in the whole city, but they let me into the depot, which they guarded, to get what sleep I could in a railway day-coach. They roused me at 6 and told me where I could get some breakfast, and I felt that I was taking my ham and eggs for once in a pale, almost silent, company of 40 to 50 whores and petty burglars. A voluntary service, the police told me, would run a slow train to London, and I arrived there after a nine-hour crawl, without having had a crumb to eat or a drop to drink, in time to rush afoot across the city and deliver another heavy lecture. The grand net profit of the three days was $30. Most of these adventures were in connection with Rationalist lectures. How the Rationalists rewarded me will appear later.

After a few years experience in lecturing I began to engage in debates. I have never challenged any man to a debate, nor do I regard these performances as an effective means of education. My experience is that debates are usually arranged, for one reason or other, which might be propagandist, by organizations which separately approach the
desired pugilists. Except in a few cases in which I knew that the opponent selected was of so poor a type that the debate would not be fair to the audience, I always accepted and made a serious preparation. But I had become a fluent extempore speaker, and I occasionally made offers which, though frivolous in appearance, reflected my poor opinion of the case of my religious opponents, though these things were naturally quoted as evidence of my conceit. My Scottish friends many years ago pressed the most distinguished preacher in the city of Glasgow to meet me, and he replied, flattering ly, that he would need six months preparation to meet me; whereupon I told them that since the man must know some point in the religious controversy well, he might choose the subject and not let me know it until we were on the platform. He declined, affecting to be shocked at my levity.

Worse was the censure I incurred once in Melbourne, when my friends found every preacher reluctant to do battle and I told the newspapermen, who took an acute interest, that I would debate with any six of them in a bunch and they need not tell me the subject until the last moment. The papers starred my offer. Once on a boat a zealous parson from a poor London parish was lured by the “boys” of the smoking saloon to challenge me on the issue whether the rich or the poor are the more virtuous. For once in my life, in the sacred interest of entertainment, I championed the rich, and when a vote was taken I won heavily; though I do not suppose one of the 300 passengers except myself was worth as much as $1,000. But when I saw the man’s dejection and I hilariously offered a new debate in which he should defend the rich, I the poor, his language was that of the prophets.

My first debate, a two nights’ affair, was with a clergyman whose special work in the church was to lecture on the beautiful harmony of the first chapter of Genesis with the teaching of science. As was then common, he relied upon hurling at his innocent hearers the guttural words of the Hebrew text and stunning them. He, of course, did not know that I had studied this Hebrew text at Louvain University. On the other hand, when on the second night I opened and pressed upon him the ancient Babylonian or Sumerian stories from which the legends of Genesis are taken I found him completely ignorant of them.

Some time later a layman, a distinguished engineer, challenged the Rationalist Association to bring forward a champion on the question of the existence of God. In the published debate he makes a plausible show, as I had to depart for Australia just afterwards, and the authorities of the Association, never zealous for my interests, sold him the stenographer’s report and allowed him to take appalling liberties with it before publishing it. The debate had been a farce, but the most amusing feature of it, in retrospect, is that he had rushed to debate because he had a grand new argument for God. This was, in 1910, the “discovery” with which Sir James Jeans electrified the religious world 30 years later—the proof that the universe (in the existence of which Jeans did not believe) must have had a beginning and therefore God had created it. As a fact the principle of the argument goes back to Clausius (1850) and it was refuted by Haeckel in 1900 and by me in 1903. In its new dress in the 20’s and 30’s it was hailed as one of the marvelous corollaries of the discovery of radium. The churches seemed at the time to claim that God had revealed the secrets of the atom to physicists in order to make an end of Materialism. The latest sequel of the revelation is the uranium bomb, and they want science suppressed.

A third champion of the angels whom I met, a lecturer of the Christian Evidence Society, was mobbed by the audience at the close of the second night of the debate and forcibly told what they thought of his effrontery in inviting a London audience to listen to his vapourings and his Sunday school “history.” I left them to it and quietly made for the nearest saloon-bar. But I was persuaded later to meet an “important
American evangelist” who had, with much trumpeting, come to London to extirpate the belief in evolution. This was “Professor” Macready Price, Seventh Day Adventist. My Rationalist friends approached him as soon as he had settled in London and had told the press of the slaughter he projected. He agreed to meet me in the second largest hall in London, which was filled. But I had found ... Let me first explain the technique of debate which I had by this time evolved, as it may be of use to some readers. When you are going to debate, anticipate what your opponent is going to say and say it first, and anticipate what he thinks you are going to say and don’t say it. I learned that Price’s decisive argument was to have a lantern and throw on the screen pictures of certain formations in the foothills of the Rockies where what the geologist calls older rocks lie on top of what he calls younger. Lecturing in Denver some time before I had seen these rocks—it was a clear case of subsequent overlap due to volcanic pressure—and I did not fear his picture. But he had insisted that I should open the debate, and I had prepared a series of slides of the strata underneath London which lie as evenly as a billiard table for 1,000 feet or more. Price did not even exhibit his pictures, though my friend Earl Russell, who took the chair and shared my little secret, repeatedly whispered the time to him.

Not willingly I fought another duel over evolution about 10 years ago. My opponent, Mr. Dewar, had, with a colleague, written an admirable book in defense of evolution about 20 years earlier. It is worthy of all praise to avow one’s errors under the pressure of truth, but ... At all events, when that fine physicist and muddle-headed bibliolater Fleming founded and financed an anti-evolution movement (in the fourth decade of the 20th century) I was not disposed to take serious notice of it. Dewar now appeared as one of its prophets. I always gave my opponent the choice of speaking first or second, and he chose to open the debate. At breathless speed he read a long paper, mainly on the aphides, which seemed to me totally irrelevant, and the debate, as an intellectual entertainment, was ruined from the start.

It had an annoying sequel. I agreed with the Rationalist authorities who had hired two stenographers, that it was not worth publishing, and they sold the report for $20 or so to Dewar. Presently I received a letter from him enclosing less than a dozen sentences from my three speeches and saying that if I cared to check these sentences he would go to press. It is the invariable custom when a debate is to be printed to submit the reports or proofs of his speeches to each speaker. I found that a religious debater usually takes advantage of this to trim his speeches in the light of his opponent’s arguments, but in any case the reports are often inaccurate on account of the technical nature and rapid course of the debate. I saw by these specimen sentences that the reports of my speeches were atrocious, often making me say just the reverse of what I had said, and I refused my consent to publication without my seeing them. Dewar would not even then send me the reports, and he published his speeches, rewriting them to any extent he liked, and, I am told—I never took the trouble to see a copy—gave his own version of what I had said. As a result I soon learned from all parts of Britain that Dewar and his colleagues were boasting in their lectures that I had been so severely beaten in debate that I was afraid to let them publish my speeches. I sent to the secretary of the Rationalist Association a short account of the true position but it was not printed in the organ of the Association, and I suppose many Rationalists even still believe that Dewar was right.

Some years before this, in 1920, I had had the most interesting and most important of all my debates, though even this had an unpleasant sequel. Spiritualism had, naturally, made considerable progress during and just after the war-years, when mothers were easily persuaded to “get into touch” with dead officer-sons, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,
who had won wide popularity by his Sherlock Holmes stories was “the White Knight” of the new movement. My Rationalist friends challenged him to meet me and he leaped into the arena. We met in the great Queen’s Hall, which was crammed to the doors while a strong force of police had to hold off a thousand or so folk who could not gain admission at any price. The eminent lawyer, Sir E. Marshall-Hall, took the chair, and behind Doyle on the large platform were the aristocracy, including foreign ambassadors, of the movement. The debate may be read. I need say only that the Spiritualists, who did not conceal (except from him) their opinion of Doyle’s capacity, challenged me immediately afterwards to a debate with a champion chosen by them in order to redeem their defeat, but they withdrew when I accepted.

The unpleasantness was no fault of Doyle’s. Except for a Scottish divine with whom I debated recently, as I will tell, he was the one gentleman I met on the platform. I had friendly and appreciative letters from him afterwards. But I was told, when the debate was proposed to me, that he approached the matter in an idealistic spirit and insisted that neither of us should take any payment. That was easy for Doyle, who was a rich man. I was not and, although, as I have explained, I had read all Spiritualist literature of any importance up to a few years earlier, I had now to spend a week or two studying recent claims in Doyle’s books. I was then told that Doyle agreed to a fee of $50. This would not cover my time, and I knew that a debate in the Queen’s Hall would probably yield a net profit of more than $1,000. Unless a debate is arranged in aid of some specified philanthropic object it is usual to divide the net profit between the debaters. I was then assured that the Rationalist authorities would privately raise my fee to $1,000. I accepted. But when, six years later, grave events, which I will tell, further shook my faith in the Rationalist organizers of the debate, it occurred to me to ask Sir Conan if it was true that he had insisted on the restriction of my fee. He replied:

Dear Mr. McCabe:

My impression was that when expenses were paid half the receipts were to go to the L. Spiritualist Alliance and half to your Rationalist organization. I regret to say that the organizer of the debate proved to be a thoroughly unreliable person who has now been drummed out of the movement—if indeed he was ever in it—I understand that the L.S.A. never received a penny. I hope your people were more fortunate. I need not say that I got nothing. I never made any stipulation about your getting nothing. I should consider it an impertinence.

With best regards,
A. Conan Doyle.

P.S. Throwing my mind back, I may have taken the view: Divide the sum and let Mr. McCabe’s fee be determined by his own people. That is possible. I could never have presumed to name the sum.

A. C. D.

I heard that the Rationalist authorities then said that the representative of the Spiritualists who pocketed their share of the profit had lied to them about Doyle’s instructions. It is difficult to see what he would gain. But they did not offer me a cent of the $450 they took from the profit of the debate.

More interesting but more unpleasant than ever were two debates that I had with Roman Catholic champions of the first rank. It is, of course, forbidden in Canon Law that they should debate with me, but in the first case they had to yield to pressure and in the second case they believed that their champion would completely discredit me. A Dominican monk, now dead, whose name I forget, though he was considered one of their ablest propagandists, had been working zealously amongst the Protestants of South Wales, and on challenge he had to
promise to meet me. I was taking tea in the Miners' Institute before the
debate when in came a monk in his picturesque robes who almost em-
braced me and reminded me that—so he said—we had been fellow-
students at Louvain University. But the brotherly love did not survive
the debate. He had chosen that I should open, and he looked dejected
when I delivered a carefully prepared indictment of his Church. Rising
in his turn he at once resorted to trickery. He demanded that I should
declare there and then what I thought of Protestantism. I was familiar
with the maneuver. He would appeal to the mainly Protestant audience
to put no faith in me. On principle—everybody in the room knew my
opinions—I declared the question irrelevant to a debate on "Whether
the Catholic Church is True?" and he declined to continue the debate.
He did resume later but took not the least notice of my points. The most
cultivated man in the room declared at the close that I had "wiped the
floor with him."

The other Catholic debate was even more unpleasant. The Catholic
undergraduates of London University thought that they would have a
Roman holiday if I could be induced to meet this leading lay champion,
Arnold Lunn. He chose "The Miracles of Lourdes" and, though he de-
manded the right both to open and close the debate, which no other op-
ponent of mine had ever dreamed of asking, I agreed and met him in
the Union Room of the University. It has large arm-chairs for 40 or 50
languid sophomores, and that was all I expected. But, while the organ-
izers had not notified the public, they had put a notice in the Catholic
weeklies, and several hundred folk, nearly all Catholics, were, to my de-
light, packed into the room. Lunn apparently did not know that I had
some years before written a book on Lourdes, and I made an even more
thorough preparation than usual for this debate. I was convinced from
the run of the debate that all that he knew about the subject had been
taken from two pamphlets, and I ruthlessly exposed his statements and
his claims of cures. The debate was ragged and irregular. When I
claimed that the Catholic physiologist Carrel had spent months at
Lourdes and did not admit that the cures were miraculous in the Cath-
holic sense (or supernatural), Lunn produced a book of Carrel's in which
there was a reference to the "miraculous cures." I demanded the book
and pointed out that on the next page Carrel explained that he ascribed
the cures to obscure natural forces. Lunn looked at the page and de-
clared to the audience that there was no such passage. Any reader of
the book will find it. The confusion was crowned when after two hours
the janitor cut off the electric current, and 300 or 400 of us groped in
pitch dark for our hats and coats and stumbled along the corridors and
staircases into darkest London.

The debate was worth while not only because I obviously made a
deep impression on the more thoughtful Catholics but my friend, Pro-
fessor J. B. S. Haldane, who is greatly respected by the students of Lon-
don University, made an even deeper impression. Not knowing that
Haldane was in the room, Lunn, in an unpleasant attempt to represent
me as an inferior sort of person, spoke of a recent literary debate he had
had with Haldane and told with what mutual courtesy it had been con-
ducted. The Catholic audience loudly cheered and looked maliciously at
little me. But there was dead silence when Haldane, looking dour, rose
from behind a bank of girl-students and said that whatever he had felt
three or four years ago he now knew that Catholics, from the Pope
downward, were all "liars" and he would not trust or respect one of
them.

For these debates I never received a cent, as was the case with much
of my work. But I will close with a reference to my last debate, in 1946.
My good Glasgow Rationalist freinds persuaded a well-known and re-
spected preacher to meet me in debate. He was a gentleman of aristo-
cratic character but he had not the skill to convince a Glasgow audience
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, 1918, 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 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 kindliness 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 ranking 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 over-bold 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 inoxicated 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 employee 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 foothills 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, Mitla, 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 an dtraveled 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 mightly 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 inflict ed 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 souldly 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 smacked 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 a 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 Dedeagatch, 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 holliday, sitting in the dust for hours in the Salonica station yard with a choice bunch of hoboes 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 Aegean 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 Mitchin- koff 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 grand-daughter 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 MacCabeen ever to be a McCabeen”; 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’ parlormaid 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 Milyukov and other Russian Liberal refugees in London, who met at the house of my friend Maria Levinskala, 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 Pekin, 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 blunt 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 lentent 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 Elliot 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 have 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 aban-
don my home. The boat was delayed, and I left it at Newfoundland, and
made the long overland journey to Chicago, where they bolsterously and
humildly 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 futility of the puddle into which I
had stepped. I could get no satisfaction from the chairman and direc-
tors 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 associa-
tions 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 Mac-
donald, as generous as he was competent in these matters, had arranged
finess 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" be-
cause 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 An-
geles, 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 be-
tween 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 con-
cerned.'

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 em-
ployer 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 cold-
ly 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 bit-
terly 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, 1923. Naturally a shower of letters had reached headquarter$s
when my customary and lively monthly article disappeared, without ex-
planation, 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 cow-
ardly 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 indigna-
tion, 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 puri-
tan, 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
insane and that the Association did well to break its connection with me in time. On that point—my sanity—the reader may form his own opinion. As to the other lie, it was just a Rationalist version of the old Catholic lie of the seduced nun which has so often roused Rationalist indignation. I left my home in September, 1925, and returned to London in April, 1926. After some weeks in apartments I bought the house in which I still live and, after spending a month cleaning and decorating it, I advertised in the usual papers for a working housekeeper. From more than 100 applicants I chose a lady of whom I had never heard before. She proved, as I judged she would prove, a first-class housekeeper, and she has served me loyally through years of penury and saved my life (as I will tell) in a dangerous illness. She still runs my house; which, incidentally, suggests to me that I cannot be so bad-tempered.

On the morning of March 12, 1928, I received a notification that if I presented myself outside the door of the Unitarian Hall that night I should probably get permission to enter and attend the meeting which was, in effect, to try me. For 10 minutes I stood in the cold, wet, deserted street—it reminded me comically of the penitents of the early Church, though they at least waited inside the door—and then a clerk was sent out to summon me. I found 300 to 400 members (mostly Londoners) of the Association packing the hall and the full body of the directors and their star-supporters, such as Robertson, crowding the raised dais; and there was profound silence while I made my way to the one empty chair in the crowd. I was summoned to address the meeting, which I did; or about 30 minutes. Then the chairman, intimate friend of Robertson and of Bradlaugh's daughter, who sat near him—how she hated me for vindicating Hoolyoke against her father—opened the attack. I had to protest and correct his statements repeatedly (as he challenged me to do), but he continued for an hour to read out the indictment prepared for him. He then called upon Robertson, who made a short and venomous speech which had to be skillfully edited in the report; especially when the former lieutenant of Bradlaugh, who used to speak of Godism and Jesuitism instead of Theism and Christianity, deprecated direct attacks on religion and sneered at my Little Blue Books. He concluded by asking the audience to empower the directors to "take such action as they may consider desirable," but that raw hint at formal excommunication was too much for the audience, and he had to change the resolution.

A "Report" of the meeting, not describing itself as verbatim but clearly purporting to be such, was later sent to all the members in all parts of the world. I have rarely read so untruthful a document. It is preceded by a statement of the secretary, on behalf of the directors, assuring the members that I planned to start a rival organization and detach members from theirs. This was grotesquely false. I have never in my life wanted to lead any movement—the position of leader of a small movement is apt to be either comic or tragic—and it can be imagined how stupid was the idea at that time that I could desire to lead Rationalists. The Report was further provided with scores of footnotes of the most inaccurate and wanton description. One quoted Mr. Ward's Chicago secretary as flatly denying my statement about the police charge against Ward, which had been in all the Chicago papers, and giving a quite mendacious account of what happened. There were about 30 of these unchecked statements in footnotes and 10 pages of similar notes at the end by Mr. Charles Watts. Robertson's speech was, as I said, much altered. A speech by F. J. Gould in my support was suppressed, and not the least indication was given that the attack on me proceeded along after Robertson's speech, and that in the end when I proposed to make a short reply, the chairman blandly replied that there was "no time." It was more like a cowboy trial in the Old West than a grave inquiry among cultivated Humanists.

When the chairman refused me a hearing, after I had been attacked
for about two hours, I left the room, amidst a stony silence, without a word. A couple I did not know followed me to sympathize with me, and, as they detained me outside the door, the whole body of these 300 Rationalists, whose esteem I imagined I had, now passed me on the way to the street. Not one had a word for me. Robertson had earned his fee—an official of the Association afterwards said that he was paid $75 for this attack on me—and by the tactics of the authorities the truth had been stifled. I made my way back to my solitary little house, gray and broken (my housekeeper says). Of the more distinguished members of the Association with whom I had been friendly only Earl Russell and Sir Robert Stout wrote me in the days that followed to ask the true story. Of the 3,000 members hardly half a dozen wrote or spoke to me. I found myself in a frozen solitude in comparison with even the loneliness I had felt on leaving the Church.

How did it happen? Of Robertson I will say only that, while his character had never been attractive, it deteriorated heavily during his few years experience of higher politics. In 1926 he wanted work, and he was ready for the intrigue against me. The members of the Association were an admirable body of men and women, and I now realize better, as I pore over the old documents, what excuse could be made for their monumental ingratitude. They had, like all organizations, a dread of schism and disruption. Better that one just man should die ... They were a little snobbish, awed by titles and academic dignities—and they saw all these arrayed behind the directors. They were, for a society essentially devoted to criticism, lamentably uncritical about the character of the men who led them. This I have seen in all the organizations, from the Church onward, to which I have ever belonged. But what one can chiefly say for them, and I say it gladly, is that the lie that I wanted to disturb their Association and found a society of my own must have strongly influenced them; and the lie that I left my wife, whom many of them knew, "to live with another woman" must have alienated large numbers even who were not puritans. I do not say that this exonerates them. They had no right to expect the truth from men who were so obviously bent on driving me out of their society. It was better that one man should die ... So I died. Any cur could now yap at my corpse.

12. THE NEW LIFE

If a melodramatic note seems to have crept into my narrative dismiss it. I am not going to boast that "my head was bloody but unbowed" or any other such rant. Probably the morning after my most profound humiliation I was at my desk by 10, rapidly writing the pages of "The Key to Culture." After Chicago and during the acid experiences of 1928 I wrote my 50 Little Blue Books, at the rate of one a week. They reflect, I hope, neither dejection nor anger at life. In March of 1928 I was midway through the writing of my "Key to Culture," and I would defy any man to find in one of those volumes the faintest red reflection of an emotional eruption. In short, I was from the beginning of 1928 engaged in a greater and far more useful enterprise than any I had undertaken for the British Rationalists, and this enabled me to shake off the showers that had pelted me and recover my poise.

I was, as I said, lecturing in Kansas City in 1925 when Mr. Haldeman-Julius, of whom I had often heard, invited me to come to Girard and see if we could not devise some sort of cooperation. I had so fine a day with him and Marcet (with whom I fell in love at once) and lovely little Alice that I refused to take the train in time for the dinner of honor that awaited me in Kansas City. We fixed the schedule of the 50 L.B.B., and at 3 in the morning I left to catch the train for the first stage on my way to Denver and San Francisco. In California I had the pleasure
of a long talk with Burbank in his house at Santa Rosa. His strength was failing—he died a few weeks later—and a young lady valiantly held the door against visitors, but when Burbank heard me give my name he bade her bring me in and we had a long and stimulating talk. In his later years Burbank had moved from ideas of creating new flowers and fruits to the idea of creating a new race by cultivating children. He had found how injuriously the dreams of the churches hindered the work and had said so. He followed my work, he assured me, with complete sympathy.

Back in London I accepted the loan of an apartment in the center of the city from a friend and got ahead with the Blue Books. When I found a quiet little house in a quiet little suburban street I continued to write the books and mail one every week in singular circumstances. For a month I worked as a house-decorator, ending on my knees scrubbing the floors—buying furniture had nearly emptied my treasury—and all the time this irritating and disquieting fuss over an imaginary debt quivered like sheet lightning on the horizon. For a month I was my own cook. In such odd circumstances were written half the Blue Books, and then I secured my admirable housekeeper. For a time, however, I had a new distraction. I had two houses to maintain, no source of income in Britain, no plans in America beyond the Blue Books. But Mr. Haldeman-Julius soon evolved the idea of the “The Key to Culture,” and long before I completed the 40 volumes I had a contract for a lecturing tour from coast to coast in Canada.

The One Big Union of Winnipeg, under the lead of one of the finest men I met in Canada, Bob Russell, had invited me some years earlier to lecture one Sunday in Winnipeg, and the lecture had attracted so large a crowd that an educational tour, mainly of lantern lectures on evolution, was arranged. The boat for Halifax was days late, and I sped overland from Newfoundland. I had a week’s lecturing in each capital and odd lectures in a few smaller towns in each state two officials of the Union accompanying me; and as my route continued from Vancouver to Seattle and San Francisco, and my work was taken over by an American Labor organization which arranged lectures in Chicago, Buffalo and other centers to New York, I saw another large slice of the globe.

The tour was not a brilliant success. Halls that were too large and unsuitable for speaking were too frequently hired, and towns with little hope of yielding an audience were occasionally selected. We struck one such small town on election night. At the appointed hour there were—in a room for 700 people—two men in the front row and two ladies in the dim distance, the farthest corner of the gallery. We returned their money to the ladies, and my two companions engaged the two men (from an agricultural college) for more than an hour in a story-telling competition which made the air blue. But the tour stands out in my memory for many features. Between Chicago, New Zealand, and other places Rationalists had—shall I say failed to pay me?—sums that total about $1500. I found the boys of Canada’s One Big Union the promptest and most cheerful cashiers I ever encountered, and it was a pleasure to work with them. We had many a merry night after a lecture.

I think that it was on this tour that Dr. Riley, the Fundamentalist leader, challenged me to a few debates. Though his speeches were, as I expected, extremely crude, I was glad to get the opportunity to speak in small Fundamentalist towns, as well as in Chicago, Minneapolis, and New York. In one small town, where the voice of the evolutionist had never been heard before, two men drew me into a quiet corner and told me that they were delegated by the others to thank me and say that they had all been deeply impressed. At another small town about 200 of the audience refused to vote at the close. Riley demanded at the close of each debate that the audience should vote, not on evolution, but
“whether Dr. Riley or Dr. McCabe had won,” and I heard that he repeatedly boasted that at every encounter he had “beaten the most famous champion of the evolutionists.” On the contrary, while he naturally won by a large majority in the three small towns—I had gone in the hope of addressing a hostile audience—in Chicago he was snowed under, in New York (as I will tell) the vote was overwhelmingly against him, and in his own city, indeed his own parish, of Minneapolis, the vote of the immense audience was so even and so clumsily taken by the Fundamentalist chairman that I disputed it.

But Dr. Riley was entirely conscientious in regard to our business arrangement and, in spite of my hard hitting, courteous and helpful throughout our little tour. Indeed, the profit on the tours arranged by Socialists and Fundamentalists was sufficient to outweigh the defaults and defacements I had suffered on Rationalist tours. For the first and only time in this pious globe-trotting I was returning home with more than $1,000; but in view of statements made by my colleagues in London I should add that it was not much more, and was less, for a half year’s hard labor, than they would earn working five days a week in comfortable offices. Yet even this record was spoiled by Rationalists.

The debate with Riley in New York was not organized by him or the local Fundamentalists. They knew New York. But a Rationalist of, I understood, responsible position, offered us $100 each and organized the debate on an ambitious scale. Had it been successful he would have made a profit of more than $1,000. Riley demanded and got his $100 bill before he set foot on the platform. It was a ghastly failure, and I not only failed to get my fee but lost nearly the same amount in expenses. I had drafted my money to London and I had to borrow $15 from a comparative stranger, who saw me to the boat, in order to get through, parsimoniously, to London. However, it is the vote that is of interest here. The Fundamentalists had virtually taken over the organization, without any financial responsibility, and had provided three juries: the audience, which voted overwhelmingly for me, a “special jury of New York citizens” (they sat behind the chairman like a crest of Negro minstrels and were mainly Fundamentalists) who voted for Riley, and a large body of 16-year-old high school pupils who, to Riley’s comical disgust, voted by an immense majority for me.

My last apostolic journey was in 1930. It was not with a view to profit and yielded none, but was an educational experiment, a month’s lecturing in Dr. L. M. Birkhead’s Unitarian Chapel in Kansas City, Mo., arranged by Mr. Haldeman-Julius, and as such was successful. Of the uniform kindness and generosity I encountered it is hardly necessary to speak, but one point may amuse the reader. On my last day in Kansas City I learned, on absolutely reliable evidence, that the city is so liberal in its provision of amenities that you could hire a man, at a certain business office, for $15 to “bump off” anybody you disliked. I was sad. I had infuriated the local Catholics and they had not thought my life worth $15. I returned much lowered in my self-esteem, by way of Baltimore, where I had discovered a cousin, and Washington; but I was uplifted a little in spirit to find that for a day, in southern trains, I became a “cunnel.”

American readers, for whom this account of me is written, will know enough about the vast work I did for E. Haldeman-Julius in the next 17 years. From my general “Key to Culture” we selected fields for extensive detailed treatment: a study of sex—it is my friend Haldeman-Julius who gave it the title “Key to Love and Sex”—a history of morals from the age of the Pyramids to ours, history of Atheism, a history of the Roman Church, and a biographical history of “The Hundred Men Who Moved the World.” Then there were odd volumes, and a new series of booklets on current topics; and for a time I wrote a monthly Militant Atheist and contributed to The American Freeman. I had almost aban-
doned the platform, but I annually visited the Leicester Secular Society which (as earlier described) was my first love and has been close to me in generous friendship through all the vicissitudes of my career. Annually also I made the journey to Glasgow, where the warm-hearted Scottish Rationalists and Secularists always gave me a grand welcome. Other Secular societies, which seemed to resent warmly the conduct of the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, got visits from me. In London the South Place Ethical Society resumed "diplomatic relations," and I was glad to find myself once more in that fine institution. In 1946 they made me a generous present in recognition of 50 years lecturing for them.

But I had little time for lecturing. I was writing more than half a million words a year for E. Haldeman-Julius and at least a book a year for Bishop Brown until he died in 1937. I was still immersed in this flood of work when, in 1934, a director of the Rationalist Association, Surgeon-Admiral Beadnell who had been my friend for many years, asked if I would entertain the idea of writing again for them. It is another sheer untruth that I returned in sackcloth and ashes to this Association when my American work failed. Few literary men in the world could have been writing as much as I did in 1934 when Beadnell wrote me. But for my own credit I would prove that there was on my side no incurable rancor, and I found time for the work and hoped that new blood in the executive of the Association portended a new spirit.

Americans, who seem to be strangely misinformed (if they seek any information at all) on this point, will care to know the subsequent course of this re-association. I found, and tolerated as well as I could, that although the Association had still no men of either literary or scholarly competence on the staff, the old practice, which is almost unknown in the literary world generally, of embroidering the margins of my proofs with amateur corrections was resumed. Sentences which I wrote in literary English were turned into journalese, and men who knew nothing about the subject of the book corrected my statements. The first important book I wrote for them, "The Splendor of Moorish Spain," based upon the soundest Spanish authorities and my own study of the Arab remains, was described in a scantly and shabby notice by a totally ignorant reviewer (an engineer, I learned) in the organ of the Association as hardly worth crossing a room to read; whereas it was meant to convey to Rationalists the real secret of the restoration of civilization in the Middle Ages. It was a handsome, profusely illustrated book, and it filled a conspicuous gap in British historical literature.

As the older men died off our relations improved a little, but they soon recovered their slightly acid flavor. At the beginning of the war I was invited to write a "Rationalist Encyclopedia" of 450,000 words—still receiving, though the cost of living had doubled, only $5 per 1,000 words, which at that time would not have been offered for hack work on a suburban paper. But the "correcting" was the last straw. The whole bunch of amateur critics was let loose upon my manuscript—one, it is true, was a self-conscious professor but there were not three pages in 1,000 that touched his subject—and I wearily spent weeks tracking down their inaccurate, often insolent, statements. In short, when I received a copy of their final and peremptory corrections I was able to report that while they had discovered a dozen or so trivial errors—I had not seen proofs or might have detected most of them—they had made many times more mistakes in 50 pages than I had made in 700. I fear this exhibition of bad temper on my part did not sweeten our relations, and the extraordinary clause was now inserted in my contracts that they retained the right to refuse to publish any book I wrote at their request. This clause was soon enforced. My work was "not up to my usual standard." I scented a painfully familiar atmosphere.

I should add that apart from questions of personality the Association had changed its aims in the 20 years. The word Rationalism was always vague—even the Jesuits held that they were the true Ration-
alists—and the definition of it as "a claim of the supremacy of reason" did not clarify it. But it had always meant criticism of religion and, for reasons into which I need not enter, this was gradually pushed further and further into the background until it almost disappeared.

In the spring of 1946 I was invited to take the chair at a public propagandist meeting organized by the society and addressed by two recruits of the new type, a professor of metaphysics and a professor of mathematics. They both snubbed me most offensively, before the audience, for criticizing the Catholic Church in America—incidentally they told the audience to treat as a joke my statement that there was in America a dangerous agitation for war upon Russia!—and neither mentioned Rationalism in his learned and entirely pointless address.

These matters must be of faint interest to Americans, and I will see myself through this eighth decade of my life. Mr. Haldeman-Julius struggled valiantly against the deepening gloom of the depression, and at this period I spent a long holiday every summer in a friend's chalet in Switzerland. It was during the last of these holidays that I heard that the state of the book-trade in America made it useless to continue to write books and, as Bishop Brown was dead, owing but not leaving me money, I had for four or five years only the small income from my books in England. Almost at once another calamity broke upon me. In prosperous days I had—so it was represented to me—invested nearly $10,000 in the business of a family which I had known for more than 20 years and regarded as of the highest character. I received only about $1,500, and so lost nearly half the money I had laboriously saved for my declining years. I lost a further $6,000 in the general crash of investments and I approached the age of 70, with a gap between my income and expenses of at least $1,000 a year, and, in spite of the most drastic economy, more capital had to go. But for the loyalty and skill of my housekeeper during those five grim years I doubt if even my stubborn spirit would not have been broken.

In the middle of this period I reached my 70th birthday (1937) and generous American friends, apprised by The American Freeman, gave me welcome help, though they had no idea of my circumstances. In England there was a tradition of recognizing the 70th birthday of leading workers of the Rationalist movement, but mine passed without mention. It is ironic that the one greeting that reached me came from a strict Catholic, my sister; and I may add that the only legacy I ever had was a small sum from her modest estate. Shortly after my birthday, however, an old Rationalist friend wrote an indignant letter to the organ of the Rationalist Association, and a small note, immensely overshadowed by an appeal for the journal itself, appeared in that organ intimating that subscriptions for a birthday gift to me would be accepted. I broke a long silence by writing to Mr. C. Watts and cordially thanking him for the proposal. With shame I confessed to him that I was reduced to penury. There were then 4,287 members of the Association. Apart from a generous gift by the directors out of the funds and the contributions of 10 old friends, I received less than $500. More than 4,000 of the 4,287 members took no notice of the appeal. I was dead.

The reader is by this time probably as weary of hearing of my calamities as I am of writing of them, and I can hardly plead in extenuation that such experiences in these later years help to explain my attitude to life. For by this time I was, to borrow a phrase from Talleyrand, an old umbrella and another shower or two did not make much difference. But this sketch of my career is destined mainly for the eyes of friends and old readers, and they will expect the realism and candor that I have ever preached. I trust, too, that it will prevent any from repeating a question that has so often been put to me: How is it that neither of my sons (both now electrical engineers in good positions) has emulated my zeal to help folk to right thinking? No reader of this narrative is likely to ask me that question.
Came the war and the new pulsing of wealth in the veins of America; and E. Haldeman-Julius began again to sparkle with ideas of books and send them along to me. In the last five years, between the ages of 75 and 80, I must have written between two and three million words for his press. And it has been a sheer pleasure. An American literary monthly said a few years ago that there were only two writers, Clarence Darrow and McCabe, who ever stood firm with Mr. Haldeman-Julius and compelled him to accept their terms. I know nothing about his business relations with Darrow but the statement was moonshine in so far as it concerned me. On that happy night in Girard 22 years ago he offered me a rate of payment which I thought adequate and at once accepted, and from that day to this we have never discussed terms. So I wrote to the monthly to which I have referred and the editor honestly inserted my correction. I have never asked a high fee of anybody for any of my services.

I am content with life. Many a time during the London blitz, when my work flowed on as usual, I sat by my fire reading, as I always do from 9 o'clock to 12 or 12:30, a detective or a Western story while the ominous throb of a German plane drew nearer and the whine and the thud, thud, thud of explosive bombs punctuated its approach. I continued to read and even smiled a little. Sometimes I let the book sink for a moment and said to myself: It was a long life, a good life, and if this is the end I have no complaint. One night a plane, scurrying home and dropping its load of incendiary bombs rapidly as it fled, crossed directly over my house. A bomb, fortunately of the lighter type, fell on the roof of my house and bounced into the street, and I went out in my slippers, pipe in mouth, put my sandbag on the blaze, and returned to my novel. One Sunday, near the end, I was writing as usual when a rocket-bomb fell a few hundred yards away. I did not know until the afternoon. I had learned to protect my work with the same film of indifference to thuds and blasts and crashes as to the cries of babies and the chatter of their mothers in the street. One night, returning from a lecture in the provinces, I had to walk five miles home through streets that were lit only by the blaze of the guns and by burning houses, between midnight and 2 in the morning; and almost every pub I passed had defiantly extended its hours—the law closes them at 11 on Sundays—and had a boozey chorus of 50 to 100 men chanting the latest indecent songs to the hellish orchestration of the guns and the giant drum-beats of the bombs. I joined them in one. Many pubs were struck, and the choir was transferred to the angelic halls.

I had foretold the war. American readers will not at once put me in the class of Churchill and others who “warned the nation.” Churchill never foretold the war, and the way in which he has bluffed both Britain and America into believing that he warned Britain and then led it to victory is part of that systematic deception of our age that explains most of its tragedy. Churchill was as pitifully duped by Mussolini as the British statesmen and aristocracy were by Ribbenton’s assurances that the Nazis meant only to extinguish Socialism. He, in the one medium available to him in those days, the London Standard, assured Britain to the end that with such staunch allies as Italy and France it need fear nothing. Mussolini and Petain led him by the nose; and it was from no coincidence that he was “painting the Italian lakes” when his letters to Mussolini were being hawked in that district. My own peremptory warning of the coming war, even of its European extent, was published in 1937. in my “History of the World Since 1918” (p. 122); and I equally foretold the tragic failure of the peace. As early as October 31, 1943. I spoke in London (South Place Ethical Society) on “The Shadow of the Coming Peace.” My audience was one of the most intellectual in London, and probably not one person in it agreed with me; and I have already told how when in the spring of 1946, speaking to a Rationalist audience
in the same hall, I warned them of the more horrible atomic-bomb war that was threatening, and professors an daudience mocked me.

I might be pardoned if I had sulked in my tent or bitterly told the world to go to hell its own way. Under the strain, not so much the tragedies that befell as the spectacle of the supineness of most folk and the wilfulness of their guides, my friend, H. G. Wells, with whom I had become intimate, broke down and declared the malady of the race incurable. It is safe to prophesy about events that you will not live to see, and it is rather in order to give the reader some understanding of the mood in which I pass my remaining years that I make this act of faith, or this one more forecast that is a reasoned deduction from realities; that within 10 years the mass of the people of the leading nations of the earth will realize how they have been deceived by their political orators, their press, and their radio-sophists and will force life into a path, lit by science, in which there will be such progress as the world never witnessed before. It is horribly possible that within the next year or two America will be persuaded by the vile conspiracy of its industrialists, bankers, and religious leaders to embark upon that terrible enterprise which they call a preventive war, and that the retaliation of Russia will be so ruthless that the two greatest civilizations will be reduced to an impotent existence in fields of ruins. But it is sheer nonsense to say that even that would mean the end of civilization.

So I continue, as placidly and confidently as I did 40 years ago, to use whatever opportunity I get to open the eyes of men to reality—to all reality. For 20 or 30 years I have called myself an Atheist. A growing impatience of hypocrisy moved me one day to inquire what this elegant word “Anostic” and the despised word “Atheist” really meant, and to my surprise I found that, according to the Oxford Dictionary and all the leading authorities, I and all those colleagues of mine who called ourselves Agnostics were in fact Atheists. For America, Funk and Wagnalls’ Dictionary is surely authoritative, and it approvingly quotes these words of Dr. Flint, a standard religious writer:

“What is called positive or dogmatic Atheism is so far from being the only kind that it is the rarest of all kinds. Every man is an Atheist who does not believe in God.”

Few have had more experience in these matters than I, yet I never met an Atheist who thought it necessary to “deny the existence of God.” It is the Agnostic, who is so apt to think it superficial, blatant, or in bad taste to call himself an Atheist, that checks himself with the wrong label. Huxley’s real aim in coining the name Agnostic was respectability, but at least he had the support of the Humean philosophy. In 99 cases out of 100 the modern who calls himself an Agnostic has not.

But Atheism is not “merely a negation” or a negative frame of mind. It is just the negative aspect to a theologian of a large and positive creed; and to say that I devoted my life to Atheism would be as stupid as to say that a Socialist devoted his life to a mere negation—the denial of the virtue of individualism. All the learning that I have packed into 65 years of study is part of my creed. It is atheistic and materialistic but both these are just negative aspects of it. Some call it Naturalism and some Humanism, but too much vagueness and timidity shelter under those banners. There is no need of a label. I have said how having followed the course of evolution from the condensation of nebulae into globes, the advance of life from mud flats in the primitive sea to the appearance of that degree of intelligence which we call civilization, I endeavored to apply the same realistic and entirely candid method to our social, political, and economic problems. I have given my name to all sorts of reforming organizations, though most of them quietly cut it out when they became prosperous and respectable and I became less and less respectable in my labels. From the first year when I looked with a scientific eye at the problems of today I became convinced that
a collectivist or Socialist organization alone would enable us, now that science has so wonderfully fertilized production, to avoid over-production, depression, and unemployment and to utilize to the full the resources of modern science.

Why I have never belonged to any political or economic society I have explained. *Enfant terrible* to the end, let me give away one more little secret. On the eve of one of my Australian trips a few men who, they told me, represented a Labor organization asked me if I were willing to be nominated candidate for the parliamentary representation of a South London borough. I had to sail next day and asked time to consider; but when I returned, ready to accept, I heard no more about it—except a whispered explanation that MacDonald and Snowden and the other Areopagites had shuddered at the proposal to adopt an ex-priest and Atheist. And when I see today how lamentably their successors are betraying the hopes of Socialism by their blunders and compromises I thank whatever gods there be that my steps were diverted from the broad road that leads to—honors.

I go on, cheerfully, with the work which, as a new citizen of the planet, I took up 50 years ago: to refute and pour irony upon all lies and hypocrisies, to denounce all cruelties and injustices, to give to such part of the world as I can reach all truths and facts that may help them in charting their lives. I have had a grand time in spite of all the malice, meanness, and ingratitude; and the last hour of the day is not marred by any of the weariness that usually punishes the octogenarian, for lingering so long on this planet. I am never tired, and I have forgotten what a headache is. A few months ago a policeman held me up, in the public street, and, to my amused inquiries he gave the still more amusing explanation that I corresponded to the description of a burglar who was operating in the district, "an athletic looking man of about 65." I have no desire for a long life if it means the usual penalty of a tired brain, nor do I ever concern myself nervously about health. To work cheerfully every day, to eat temperately, and to spare an hour or an hour and a half each day for a brisk walk—I live on the fringe of the great city—are the only secrets of my medicine chest. I rarely visit or receive visitors, not from churlishness but quiet taste, and this summer I have taken my first vacation in seven or eight years.

But I work with one ear lazily open for the tinkle of the camel-bell that heralds the approach of the caravan of death. I neither seek relief in sleep, as I have seen so many of my generation do, nor do I fret or repine at the thought that the pen must soon drop from my nerveless fingers and the dear sunlight must fade. How I have always loved sunlight! Perhaps I shall survive this new phase of stringency and privation, which I now share with all the honest folk of my land; though for me it is bountifully tempered by the generosity of friends across the ocean. Perhaps a time will come again when I can sip wine or beer instead water when I sit with my pipe and novel over the fire for the last and best three hours of the day. Perhaps not... Kismet. Life has been too good for me to complain that it cannot run forever. I neither, with Whitman, talk of "Sweet Sister Death," nor shall I murmur, with Beethoven, that "the comedy is over." To me, the devout harvester of facts, death will be just the last fact.
Joseph McCabe, at work in his home library.
JOSEPH McCABE, AT 60 YEARS OF AGE
JOSEPH MCCABE, AT THE TOP OF A QUEENSLAND MOUNTAIN

IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH, IN 1920
(JOSEPH MCCABE IS THE FIRST ON THE RIGHT)