

signed
1935

Another. *Dear* (Betty)

HEAVENLY
DISCOURSE

with
lover
Erskine

By CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD

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THE CATS
LOS GATOS, CALIF.

12 March, 1935

My dear Henle:

I have your "Circular to Editors," saying that the Examiner of Publications for the Commissioner of Customs at Ottawa, Canada, had prohibited Heavenly Discourse entering that jurisdiction.

Now, Henle, you may fool the editors, but you can't fool me. This is just one of your clever advertising tricks. Only a short time ago I received a newspaper clipping from somewhere, reciting that you had given Heavenly Discourse a birthday dinner, at which you announced in effect that Pegasus, with Heavenly Discourse on his back, was flying as strong as ever: no sign of sprain, spavin or heaves; and was on his hundredth—or was it thousandth—lap around the globe. Now if this, or half of it, be true, why descend to this trick of getting the most heavenly of Heavenly Discourse censored and banned from our nearest and dearest neighbor, just for a little more circulation? If there really be such a person as the Examiner of Publications for the Commissioner of Customs at Ottawa, Canada, why don't you give his real name? —J. S. Roe—Yes. Richard Roe, cousin to John Doe. There ain't no such person! You are just cooking up a Canadian Pooh-Bah; and if there were such a person he would not be such a fool. I know there are foolish people—plain fools—damn fools—and censors—but I do not believe there is even a censor so big a fool as to try to stop Pegasus with Heavenly Discourse up, on his hilarious course. It is too big a risk; he might be run down.

They say the Prince of Wales is a charming fellow and fond of humor and satire; I believe he is still a citizen of Canada, and has a hunting lodge somewhere in its wilds; I would hate to have him deprived of the pleasure of reading Heavenly Discourse just because of the stupidity of an official; he suffers too much as it is from that; so please send him by mail, with my compliments, care the Governor-General of Canada, at Ottawa, a copy of this amusing book. If that fails to reach him, send a copy to his home address, London, England—all at my expense, of course.

You ask for my suggestions in this matter. I don't think there is any matter. Your asking for my suggestions is another of your tricks. The only suggestion that occurs to me is another Heavenly Discourse, and here it is!

JAMES HENLE
The Vanguard Press
100 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Yours sincerely, but sceptically,

CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD

Another

HEAVENLY DISCOURSE

GOD, *wrapt in an ermine overcoat,
is watching an ice-hockey
match between Hell and
Ottawa, Canada.*

SAINT PETER *comes in.*

- Saint Peter* Omniscience, there is a Soul outside—
GOD Alas, Peter, too many are outside. You don't bar any out, do you?
Saint Peter Not now—not since you threw the Heavenly Gate wide open.
GOD I had to, Peter. Hell was getting the best of it.—Well?
Saint Peter I don't know what to make of this Soul—if it be a soul. It does not seem quite right in its mind—if it has a mind.
GOD Peter, we cannot discriminate that way. Heaven would be as empty as a church on weekdays.
Saint Peter I'm not sure, Omniscience, that this really is a soul. It blows its fingers—it slaps its thighs—it threshes its arms about itself, and dances a double shuffle—
GOD What's that—a double shuffle?
Saint Peter It is a religious dance for cold latitudes, I believe.
GOD David danced before Me.—What is that roaring and shouting?
Saint Peter I do not know, Omniscience.
GOD Well, go out and see.
Saint Peter goes out.
Peter gets more irritating every year.
Saint Peter returns.
Well?
Saint Peter It is nothing, Omniscience—nothing. Hell scored in the ice hockey game.
GOD Nothing—That's a lot.—And this is the sort of a reporter I have to put up with—nothing. It seems to me that Hell is scoring everywhere. (*To Saint Peter*) Get this dancer's name and position. Maybe he only has Saint Vitus Dance.
Saint Peter That's not a religion.
GOD There're a lot of religions, Peter, that you don't approve of. Bring him in and we will see. Vitus was one of your Saints, I believe.
Saint Peter I don't remember. There are so many of them.
Saint Peter goes out.
GOD Peter takes no interest in any sport but fishing. I am afraid that he has become a Faithful Servant. And if there is anything that annoys me it is a Faithful Servant. Heaven is full of them. I think I ought to pension Peter—
Saint Peter returns.
Well? Who is it?
Saint Peter I can't make out who it is; it stutters so.
GOD Bring it in—bring it in—bring it in.
Saint Peter goes out.
It is always so—I never look forward to a little intellectual recreation but something like this happens—And today, the match between Hell and Ottawa—Ottawa, somewhere on Earth, I think.

Saint Peter comes in with a shivering Soul that claps its hands and slaps its arms around itself, and dances a sort of shuffling dance.

- GOD Who is it?
- Saint Peter
(To the Soul) Who are you?
- Soul I am J. S. Roe, the Examiner of Publications for the Commissioner of Customs at Ottawa, Canada.
- Saint Peter I have heard of John Doe and Richard Roe and I know they are anonymous criminals. My name is Peter. Don't trifle with me, what is your real name?
- Soul J. S. Roe, Examiner of Publications.
- Saint Peter If you don't tell me your real name I'll put you in Hell.
- GOD Don't threaten it, Peter; that was its real name—it is going to Hell anyway—don't be harsh.
- Saint Peter Where are you from?
- Soul Ottawa, Canada.
- Saint Peter Spell it.
- Soul O—t—t
- Saint Peter Don't stutter so. Spell it slowly.
- Soul O — t — t —
- Saint Peter God, there it goes—t — t — t — I cannot understand him.
- GOD Try to stand still, my good soul, and tell us your name and position.
- Saint Peter He has forty positions a minute. Stand still—Don't shuffle.
- Soul My name is J. S. Roe.
- Saint Peter He insists on being a criminal.
- Soul Examiner of Publications for the Commissioner of Customs at Ottawa. At Ottawa—at Ottawa—Canada.
- GOD Why, of course: Ottawa. How stupid of you, Peter. That's the hockey team playing against Hell. (To Soul) What did you do, Mr. Roe?
- Soul Nothing, really. I examined books to decide what the public might or might not read. I was a censor.
- GOD Ah, yes. Edgar Allen Poe, incensed by an unseen censor.—Did the people respect your views and refrain from reading the books you prohibited?
- Soul Well, no, Omniscience. The books I prohibited were the ones they read.
- GOD I see you tell the truth.
- Soul Almighty God, all souls stand naked here.
- GOD They do—they do. But I suppose that would be punished in Ottawa. Tell me some book you have censored.
- Soul The latest was a dreadful little book called *Heavenly Discourse*—
- GOD What!—Not that delightful little book by—Oh, I forget his name—but I've not laughed so heartily for eternities.
- Soul It was most blasphemous!
- GOD I did not notice it.
- Soul Oh, God, it spoke irreverently of you.
- GOD I did not notice it.
- Soul —And treated you and Jesus with great familiarity.
- GOD We wish more people were familiar with us.
- Soul It was obscene!
- GOD Obscenity is where you wish to find it. Some say the Hebrew Bible is obscene —the poetry the most sublime of any from the soul of Man.
- Soul But the Bible is your Holy Word.
- GOD So my obscenity is holy. Nonsense. The Bible is no more my word than is that of any earnest man or woman who seeks the Truth and seeks to make a better world. Obscenity!—I say again, Obscenity lies in the mind of those who seek it.—Gabriel, call Jesus and the little band of humourists I love to have about me.

The sound of a bugle is heard and the humorists of the world come in: Aristophanes, Cervantes, Rabelais, Daudet, Voltaire, Shakespeare, Swift, Mark Twain, and many more.

(To Rabelais) Francois, here we have the old, old joke once more: trying to make men good by burning their bodies or their books.

(To Mark Twain) Second Samuel, do you remember that delightful little book we all enjoyed so much during our summer session, when we lay upon the banks of the River of Life?

Mark Twain *Heavenly Discourse?*

GOD Yes, *Heavenly Discourse*.—This shivering soul has tried to shut it out of Canada.

Mark Twain Good—that is good. Then everyone in Canada will read it and be amused.

GOD More than amused, Sam—instructed too, I hope.

Rabelais Ma foi, qu'est-ce que c'est, ce Canada?

Voltaire Je ne sais pas. Je crois que c'est une terre perdue où le bon esprit est defendu.

Rabelais Les pauvres miserables.

GOD (to Soul) You say you were from Ottawa, Earth?

Soul Yes, Ottawa, Canada.

GOD Peter, isn't Canada on Earth?

Peter I don't know, God.

GOD There you are—that's Peter. And you were a censor?

Soul Yes.

GOD I fear you are lost! You must descend to the lowest Hell of Intolerance.—Send him down.

Saint Peter leads out the Soul.

A Young Angel rushes in.

Young Angel Hell has won! Hell has beaten Ottawa—fifty to nothing.

GOD Of course! Hell always wins.

All go out except God and Jesus.

GOD My son, do you still hope for man?

JESUS Father! Give me the million years you promised. Remember, they have produced the little group which just went out, and many more.

GOD Ah, yes, my son.—But where will I be in a million years? You do not realize, my son, how intolerance and stupidity wear on me.—Come.

They go out together.

HEAVENLY DISCOURSE

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