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IRVING STONE

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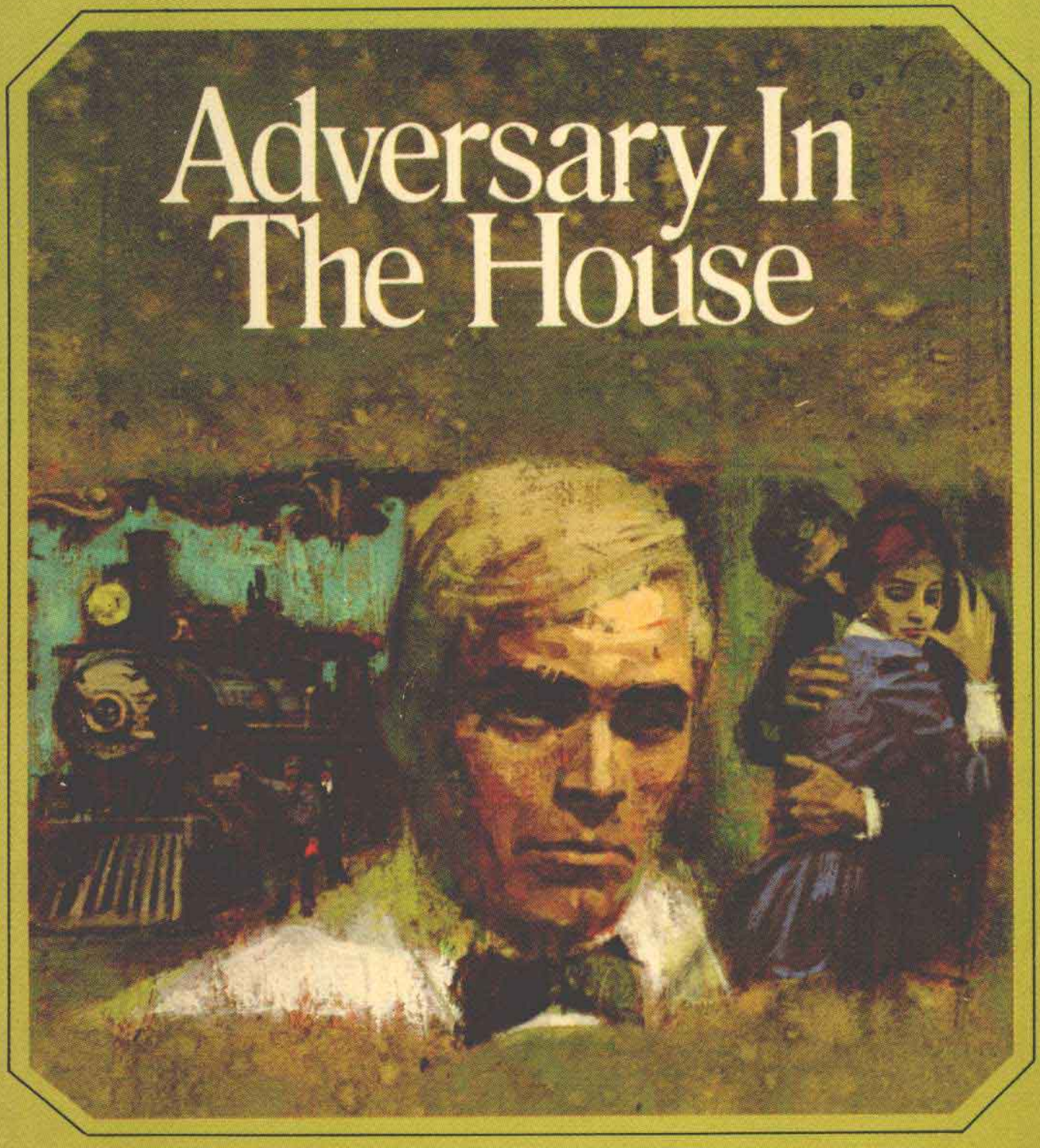
THE PASSIONS OF THE MIND



A triumphant novel of love and devotion,
passion and fulfillment

IRVING STONE

whose magnificent storytelling genius recreated the life and times of Michelangelo in THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY and Vincent Van Gogh in LUST FOR LIFE, now brilliantly evokes the blazing, turbulent age of Eugene V. Debs—the fabulous pioneer labor leader whose private life was as violent and impassioned as the dedication that raised him to the heights of greatness . . . and drove him to the depths of public scorn. . . .

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—*Kirkus Service*

Irving Stone

Adversary in the House

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For Jean, who endures

THE BOOKS

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BOOK ONE

HOME IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS LIVE

HE STOOD AT THE WINDOW IN A LONG FLANNEL NIGHTGOWN, brushing his suit carefully so that the dust would fly into the open air of Wabash Street. The October sun was just over the horizon. His young brother, still asleep in the black walnut bed, rolled over, groaned, opened one eye.

"What time is it, Gene?"

"A little after five."

"Come back to bed and let a fellow sleep."

"There's something more exciting to do than sleep, Theo."

"You say that every Sunday morning, but all you ever do is brush your clothes."

Gene took his pan of water back to the wardrobe, running a damp cloth inside the drawers to get out the last particle of dust.

"Don't you want to come with me, Theo? We painted the town red last night."

Theodore bolted upright in the bed. Gene returned his shirts, collars and neckties to the black walnut wardrobe which his mother had brought over from Alsace, then quickly slipped into an old pair of trousers and a sweater. Though he was not quite twenty he was already an inch over six feet and growing so fast that his mother swore she could watch his clothes creeping up his ankles and wrists.

"Every member of the club was out till two o'clock this morning, putting up notices of the Ingersoll lecture, and they're all in red paint."

Theodore sprang out of bed. He was only eleven but already he was sprouting upward, lean and hard like his big brother.

"Why didn't you say so, Gene? You know how I hate to miss anything."

He fell on his hands and knees, fishing out the pigskin trunk in which he kept his clothes. Their father had brought all his worldly possessions to America in this trunk, both arriving waterlogged after sixty-three days in a storm-tossed sailing ship.

It took Theodore only an instant to get himself into his clothes. The brothers went quietly down the front flight of stairs. The ground-floor grocery-store window said D. DEBS; the neighborhood called it Debity Debs both for the pleasure of euphony and because Daniel so often commented, "I will debit your account," when an unfortunate customer had neither an account nor existing cash.

The air was brisk and fragrant with the autumnal scents of the surrounding woods. They struck out for the heart of town, the older boy slowing his stride a little for his brother, the younger speeding up a bit more than was comfortable. Soon they passed the first sign that Gene Debs and the members of the Occidental Club had printed by hand during the week.

LECTURE! TONIGHT!!
October 17, 1875
TERRE HAUTE OPERA HOUSE
COLONEL ROBERT G. INGERSOLL
will deliver an address on
AGNOSTICISM and TRUTH!!
The World's Most Challenging Topic!
Can You Afford to Miss It?
Time: 7 P.M. Admission: 75¢–25¢
Auspices: OCCIDENTAL LITERARY CLUB
Bring the Whole Family

As they continued their walk Theodore saw that every available surface of Terre Haute's stores, office buildings, factories and warehouses had been plastered with the posters, though a sense of delicacy had prevented the members from pasting the announcement of the arrival of Agnosticism on the expansive and highly inviting walls of the town's churches.

The Debs boys themselves had grown up as religious tourists. Their parents being of different faiths, they had fore-

stalled any possibility of dispute by saying to their sons: "Here's a nickel, go to Sunday school," without indicating which one they were to attend. Gene, and later Theodore, would wander out on the street, join the first boy he encountered, and go to Sunday school with him. Their parents asked no questions when they returned, and it was just as well, for no matter what road they took to the varying churches, they somehow managed to pass Scudder's confectionery.

"Do you think people will come to hear Ingersoll, Gene?"

Gene flushed, spots of color appearing in high relief against his fair skin. His usually gentle, hypersensitive eyes, which changed color according to the emotion spinning through them, turned from their calm blue to a determined and purple-radiated gray.

"I don't know, Theo, it's a gamble. The other members wanted Christine Nilsson, the Swedish singer, but I had to do something exciting. What's the good of starting a forum just to listen to people sing?"

"Gosh, I hope it goes over, or it'll take you an awful long time to pay the club back that three hundred and fifty dollars."

Their tour of inspection brought them to the bank of the Wabash River. Just beyond the covered bridge were some overhanging willows. The two boys stripped and plunged into the stream for a splashing swim, enjoying the cold October water against the warmth of their bodies.

As they opened the grocery door they were welcomed by the scent of their mother's fresh-baked coffee cake. Their father was at the table in the dining room behind the store, as were their two younger sisters, Jenny and Emma. Daniel Debs was a handsome man with a finely modeled head and an austere chin beard. His deep-set eyes, spaced widely behind the long Roman nose, were compassionate and gentle. His face lighted up as his two sons entered the room.

"Gene," said Daniel, "I think you're in the wrong business; you should get a job with Patrick and Lapish as a sign painter."

Theodore rushed to his brother's defense.

"But Gene had to get those signs up, Father. It was the only way to make sure Terre Haute knew about Colonel Ingersoll."

Marguerite Debs came in from the kitchen with a platter of ham steaks and fried eggs which she set down in the center of the table, then kissed each of her sons good morning. She had on a large gingham apron tied around the middle to protect her Sunday black merino; her white hair was brushed

sharply back from the temples and there was a happy smile on her face at having her brood together.

Gene loved her deeply. For years he had called her by the affectionate nickname of Daisy. She had a wide, expressive mouth, exact replicas of which her two sons had inherited; when she pulled it slightly to one side, the better to declare herself, everyone in the Debs family knew that the law was about to be laid down.

"You've been swimming again," she observed as she ran her fingers through Theodore's damp hair. "Isn't it getting late in the season? And why don't you take towels with you?"

These were purely rhetorical questions; the boys knew that no answers were necessary. Gene patted her hand, then turned to his father.

"You were out early this morning. Did you shoot anything?"

Daniel looked around the room with an expressive gesture, as though to say, I take with me one of the greatest guns ever made in Europe; I am a crack shot; the woods are full of animals; and they ask me if I shot anything. Aloud he said quietly, "Oh, I think you might find some things in the bag: quail, pheasant, prairie chickens . . ."

Their sister Louise came in with hot rolls, jams and coffee, and the seven members of the Debs family seated themselves around the one board for the first time since last Sunday's dinner. Only the oldest sister, Mary, was missing. She had married a nurseryman several years before, and lived amidst greenhouses on the outskirts of town. The mother sat at the foot of the table, Daniel at the head. Opposite Gene and Theodore were the three girls: Jenny, the plain and the studious, who had already announced that she was going to be a schoolteacher; Louise, the plump, quiet and domestic; Emma, the pretty, the saucy, the smart, in whom all of Marguerite's maternal efforts had come to a magnificent conclusion. They were not a beautiful crew but they had open, friendly faces, wide, honest eyes and softness of speech. Hovering over the table and the room and the house of their lives was a tactile sense of solidarity: their mother's gift. To Marguerite Debs her family was all of the world. She rarely stirred out of her house, she had chores from dawn until the last member of the family was asleep, slipping through her day quietly, effortlessly. She had never forbidden quarreling among her six children; it was her love of family which permeated them.

Daniel was the first to excuse himself, going upstairs to the little parlor where, in a glass case in a corner, he kept his leather-bound volumes of poetry. He took the books out one by one, dusted them carefully, opened each to its table of

contents, his eyes glowing as he noted the authors and poems included. The cleaning done, he rearranged the volumes for new combinations of design and color and put them back. This poets' corner was his life insurance, his dream of the future, for when he was old, and his children grown, and there was no longer need to load barrels of flour and beans weighing one hundred and seventy pounds into his wagon and then carry them on his back across muddy sidewalks and up rear porch steps, he would retire, sit here and read all these beautiful lines.

Gene, too, had his sanctum, a corner of his bedroom where he had rigged up an old kitchen table as a study desk. Here he kept the few books he bought out of his earnings as a clerk. He asked Theodore to tell him when it was eleven o'clock, then closed the door behind him, sat down at the desk and opened one of the five-cent tablets in which, in a neat and fastidious hand, he wrote out his thoughts and reactions to each book as he went through its pages. He had little education: he had gone to work in the railroad yards immediately after grammar school; his reading was haphazard. He read books as he stumbled across them, as they accidentally became available, as their subject or title excited his imagination; rarely did they bear any relationship to each other or fill out an entire field of knowledge.

He opened the copy of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* which his father had given him for his birthday. In the adjoining parlor he could hear Daniel and his Alsatian cronies playing band music. Daniel, who had played the cornet in Alsace, believed that music was the most important part of his children's education; he had bought a cycloid piano from Kussner's Palace of Music, but none of the children had taken to it, and the only thing that persisted after all these years was the monthly bill from Kussner's.

In the midst of his reading Gene heard the knock on his door. Theodore came in.

"It's five minutes after eleven."

"Past eleven! But it couldn't be. I just started . . ."

"You're going to miss Colonel Ingersoll if you don't get down to the train."

— 2 —

Walking over the path he had worn to the Union Depot during the four years he had fired for the Vandalia Railroad, which ran between Terre Haute and St. Louis, Gene saddened again at the tragedy which he had heard had just befallen Robert Ingersoll's only son: young Ingersoll had become so addicted to the reading of paperback romances that

he had gone insane, been taken to an asylum and died in a cell. Nor was this Ingersoll's only misfortune: only the Sunday before a Terre Haute minister was quoted in a local newspaper as telling how Ingersoll's two daughters had become maudlin drunkards, and had been saved only by publicly repudiating their father's heresy and going back into the bosom of the Presbyterian Church.

Gene decided that Ingersoll must be torn and embittered, with deep-set tragic eyes and a stooped, wasted figure. True, the photograph sent by the lecture manager had shown him as a big, jovial man with a healthy and happy face; but Gene had been warned of the tricks of lecture managers who sent out photographs which had been taken years before, or idealized for sales purposes.

His swift strides faltered for a moment as he wondered how he would approach this rebel, about whom he had been reading. How unlike Daniel had been Ingersoll's father. To Minister Ingersoll all mankind had been evil, damned in conception and born into everlasting sin. The Devil was everpresent, inside one's head and body as well as outside; burning hell-fire was as close and inescapable as one's reflections in a mirror; life was a hideous and revolting journey along an unswerving road of lust and concupiscence, ending in the pits of eternal damnation. Robert's mother had died when he was only two, and so there had been no one to intervene. At home the Sabbath had begun on Saturday afternoon, and no voice or head could be raised out of the blackness until Monday morning. Having no assembled congregation on which to work during the week, John Ingersoll rehearsed on his two sons: they were flogged half to death for taking a few apples hanging on the road side of an orchard, and the skin was worn off their knees while their father endlessly prayed for their repentance. The two boys might well have hated their father, but instead they had pitied him, and hated orthodoxy instead.

Rounding a corner, Gene faced the familiar mustard-colored wooden depot. When he was fourteen he had gone to work for fifty cents a day scraping paint off the Vandalia cars that stood in these very yards; after a year he had substituted for a missing fireman, and kept the boilers up so well that he had been given a permanent job handling the stormy end of a scoop. Frequently his run would end at midnight at some isolated spot along the tracks, a hundred miles from St. Louis. Then the crew would pile wearily into a little shack and throw themselves fully clothed upon soiled bunks for a few hours of unconsciousness. But even at fifteen he had little patience with sleep; when the last of the men began to breathe

regularly he would get up, light a candle and read the book he had been carrying in the rear pocket of his overalls. Once a brakeman awakened just before dawn, leaned up on an elbow and watched him.

"What are you doing, son?"

"Studying."

"You mean you'd rather read that book than sleep?"

"Yes, it's more exciting."

"One of us is a danged fool," the older man had said as he settled back, "and I'll betcha it ain't me."

These had been exhilarating but danger-laden years for the boy. Every day there had been another accident: engines colliding head on, trains being hurtled from their tracks in the icy darkness, the crash of freight cars, the slipping of couplings. Yet railroaders rarely left their work, any more than the coal miners around Terre Haute refused to go into the pits because there were frequent explosions.

The Terre Haute and Indianapolis train puffed across the last mile of prairie and came to a stop with considerable more noise than Gene knew was necessary for the arresting of the engine. Some twenty passengers swung down from high platforms, were greeted by friends or relatives, and disappeared. There was only one man left standing on the platform. A kind of panic overcame Gene. Ingersoll had missed the train! It was not so much that he had lost the club's money and would have to replace it from months of tedious labor, but the Occidental Literary Club would have been made to appear ridiculous.

While these fugitive thoughts were chasing through his mind, the lone occupant of the station, an enormous fellow with a red-cheeked face and hearty smile, came up to him.

"Are you by any chance Eugene Debs?"

"Why, yes. . . ."

"For a moment there I thought I'd be left waiting at the church."

Gene seemed stunned. The man asked quietly, "Is something wrong? Has the lecture been canceled?"

"No, no . . . it's just that . . . you didn't look . . . I didn't recognize . . ."

"Didn't you receive the circular with my picture on it?"

Gene winced as he replied, "I might as well tell you the truth, Colonel Ingersoll. I was looking for an unhappy little man who could hardly carry his suitcase because of the weight of his burdens."

Ingersoll's eyes twinkled.

"Was there one misfortune in particular that you were thinking about? My son, for instance?"

Gene stared at Ingersoll unbelieving, for he could see that the colonel was laughing quietly to himself. He whispered an almost inaudible yes.

"I wouldn't worry about that story too much, Mr. Debs. My only son did not read a great many novels. He did not go insane. He did not die. *I never had a son!*"

Gene gazed steadily into the other's eyes for a moment, then joined Ingersoll's hearty laughter.

"You mean that people hate you so ferociously that they will fabricate these stories out of thin air?"

"Thin air, and gaseous."

Gene picked up Ingersoll's valise with one hand, and with the other he took the older man's arm. They began walking up to the Terre Haute House. Gene had never been with anyone who radiated such a sharp sense of good will and well-being; it was not only his magnificently rich voice which heartened with its sound before one had gathered its import; nor was it solely his flashing eyes, at once so penetrating and confiding; it was something inside the spirit: a comprehension of the human world, perhaps, and the indestructible joy of the lucky one who had found his work in life.

"I really get off easy, Mr. Debs. You must remember that only a few years ago men, women and even children were imprisoned and tortured for expressing doubts about organized religion."

By now they had reached the front of the Terre Haute House. The early morning sun vanished behind grayish clouds, and there was a sharp scent of rain in the air. Gene looked upward, anxiously.

"If it starts to pour, we're going to be in trouble. Terre Haute doesn't like to get its feet wet."

"Either in water or new ideas, eh?"

"Quite so. Your manager made me sign a contract that I would pay you the full amount in cash before you went on the lecture platform. . . ."

Once again Ingersoll laughed heartily.

"My manager is my brother-in-law. He lives in perennial fear that his sister won't get enough to eat. If you don't make any money you can forget about my fee. I really oughtn't be paid for spreading my own beliefs, I ought to pay people to come listen to me."

— 3 —

On the way home Gene stopped at Gloria Weston's to deliver the three lecture tickets Mr. Weston had asked him to reserve. Gloria lived in the corner house on Tenth Street, just