

false. I write of Canada still, but I have written of the Channel Islands, I have written of Egypt, I have written of England and South Africa, and my public—that is, those who read my books—have accepted me in all these fields without demur. I believe I have justified myself in not accepting imprisonment in the field where I first essayed to turn my observation of life to account.

I went to Jersey, therefore, with my teeth set, in a way; yet happily and confidently. I had been dealing with French Canada for some years, and a step from Quebec, which was French, to Jersey, which was Norman French, was but short. It was a question of atmosphere solely. Whatever may be thought of *The Battle of the Strong* I have not yet met a Jerseyman who denies to it the atmosphere of the place. It could hardly have lacked it, for there were twenty people, deeply intelligent, immensely interested in my design, and they were of Jersey families which had been there for centuries. They helped me, they fed me with dialect, with local details, with memories, with old letters, with diaries of their forebears, until, if I had gone wrong, it would have been through lack of skill in handling my material. I do not think I went wrong, though I believe that I could construct the book more effectively if I had to do it again. Yet there is something in looseness of construction which gives an air of naturalness; and it may be that this very looseness which I notice in *The Battle of the Strong* has had something to do with giving it such a great circle of readers; though this may appear paradoxical. When it first appeared, it did not make the appeal which *The Right of Way* or *The Seats of the Mighty* made, but it justified itself, it forced its way, it assured me that I had done right in shaking myself free from the control of my own best work. The book has gone on increasing its readers year by year, and when it appeared in *Nelson's* delightful cheap edition in England it had an immediate success, and has sold by the hundred thousand in the last four years.