THE DEVIL.

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(Illustrations by the author.)

“. . .Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

James, iv, 8.

The reader will kindly note the absence of an exclamation point after the rather startling heading of this paper. It is not therefore an expression of surprise nor of anger. I write it in most respectful spirit, aye, almost reverential, for are we not mentioning one who was once great? True, he has fallen from his high estate, but we must not forget that for æons and æons of time has he ruled supreme over that vast kingdom of the Infernal regions and held a sort of co-regency over our own affairs terrestrial. Nor should we forget that even prior to that was he a prince of Heaven itself.

My purpose is purely biographical. The task is larger than it is difficult. Material is superabundant; it in fact becomes a really serious matter to discriminate in what to take and what to leave alone, there is so very much. The traditions of every savage tribe are replete with his doings; scarce a page of history, be it of ancient Assyria, Egypt or Greece, or of our own times, but that mentions his name; all religious faiths of all times award him a most exalted place, denouncing him, true, but advertising him tremendously nevertheless. And then, too, we have His Satanic Majesty analyzed, dissected, viewed from every aspect and in every detail by wise fathers of the Church, philosophers, scientists and essayists, men like Bossuet, Roskoff, Sheinck, Langley and Réville. All this, and right at hand! Indeed is my task rather that of an editor than that of a writer.

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We must seek for the origin of the belief in a devil at the origin of man, who developed in an environment that was sometimes favorable
to him and at other times hostile—Nature. Man's very first breath is painful, for the child invariably cries directly after taking it. It is after a succession of struggles that he walks, talks and even learns to eat. His whole life is a struggle, his very conservation is at the price of an almost constant labor. However savage he may be, there is a religious vein in him, it is inherent, and it is not long before he deifies the phenomena he perceives all about him. He will soon have good gods and bad gods. The sun, the stars, vegetation, life-giving showers, on the one hand; storms, thunder, night and devouring beasts on the other. The good gods are held in high esteem, but they may safely be depended upon to go right ahead being good, and that without much urging: but the bad gods are to be feared, they deal in surprises and may pounce upon one at most unexpected times, so they must be propitiated in order to be kept as little harmful as possible. So it is that we see the Devil occupying a secondary place but, after all, constantly present, uppermost in the mind of primitive man.

These gods are without any moral character. They do good and harm because it is their nature to do so. In that they resemble
their worshipers. Man has always made his gods after his own ideals. He can build no higher. The gods of a savage are necessarily savage gods. We are reminded of the story of the swineherd who was asked what he would do in the place of Napoleon. The poor fellow thought for a long time and finally replied as if an inspiration had suddenly struck him, "I'd tend my pigs on horseback!"

It is only as we go higher in the order of humanity, among the more civilized peoples, that we find that the gods of good order invariably overcame disorder and the evil spirits, but there is still that dualism, only carried up to a more refined degree, in the mythologies of India, of Egypt and of Greece: Indra overcame the stormy cloud, Horus avenged the death of his father Osiris, and Chiva ruled pretty much everything about, good and bad. Yet do we not still find a tendency to propitiate the bad gods, a sort of buying them off so that they will allow themselves to be the more easily vanquished by the good gods? There was still a fear that if they exerted themselves they would put up too good a fight, and so "hippodrome" methods had to be resorted to. You see how ancient a precedent our prize ring and other sportive circles have for very reprehensible methods.

Among the more advanced of the ancients this dualism of their gods was often the attribute of the one, or one class of their deities. Phoebus Apollo was a god of light, protector of the arts and all that, and yet was he pitiless in his vengeances; plagues, pestilence and storms were as likely to be used by him as were his good offices. So with many others who united the good and the bad in their one
personality, but all through the Hellenic list of deities, from Jupiter and Juno to Pluto and his charming spouse, Proserpine, will you find the good and the bad gods holding almost equal places in the esteem or fear of their worshipers. Later mythologies show us the same condition of affairs; the Slav had his white and his black gods. the Saul and the Scandinavian, nearly all have had some far from prepossessing divinities.

One ancient faith that bore a remarkably close analogy to the modern idea was the Persian religion of the Zendavesta. The two classes of gods, the good and the bad, were constantly at war, and they waged it upon the surface of the earth. Ormuzd planted good things and Ahriman pulled them up and sowed evil. And was it not through the perfidy of that same Ahriman that evil originated in the world of man in the shape of a serpent that tempted man, and the latter fell into original sin? A few scholars go so far as to claim that the Hebrew recital in Genesis of a parallel case was bodily borrowed from the Babylonians. Other sages—and most of us incline to their belief to-day—explain that "both faiths went on back, far anterior to Hebrew or Persian times, to when Semite and Iranian lived together in the shadow of Ararat." We are so prone to accuse one man, or a nation, of copying from another whenever we find points of similarity between them and give so little credit to the theory that peoples of a connected ancestry are prone to have the same ideas, to develop the same traits and beliefs. What more natural than that men should think alike under similar conditions, however far apart they may be, when we consider the similarity of all men and the common origin of man? A day spent in the Patent Office will perhaps illustrate this point better than anything else.

Still, as soon as the Jewish Satan did make the acquaintance of his Persian cousin, Ahriman, he certainly did very quickly ape the latter in nearly every particular, the personnel of his infernal court, his manners, his avidity for human souls.

Of all the ancients, however, the Jews were certainly the most monotheistic. With Yahveh, who ruled the storm and the sun, rewarded the good and cruelly punished the wicked, placed temptations in the way and then gave his followers strength to resist them, there was scant place for any dualism. Indeed, in spite of what I said about a devil being mentioned upon nearly every page of history we must admit that, excepting the books of Job, Zachary and the Chronicles, there is scant mention of the Devil, if any at all, in the earliest books of the Old Testament. We find a remainder of that old duality however in certain ceremonies and unwritten laws of
that ancient people. For instance that expiation ceremony, where the high-priest loaded the scape-goat with all the sins of the people and then sent it forth as a sort of peace-offering to Azazel (surely a devil) who roamed the desert seeking whom he might devour.

The real beginning of Satan, as we have been taught to know him, was when Yahveh found it necessary to deal harshly with man

and set aside one of his court, an angel and still a member of the heavenly body, to do that part of the work. It was an angel who punished Saul, and one also who, a flaming sword in hand, appeared to Balaam. And this angel's name was Satan, "the adversary," rightly translated; he, too, who appeared to Zachary, and who got David into the scrape of counting his people. If we follow up his
history closely we find that this angel, still a good angel, mark you, degenerated into a tempter, a misleader of men.

THE JAPANESE DEVIL HEDJI.
Passes through the country on certain occasions carrying evil tidings.

Then we find him merged, by I know not what metamorphosis, into the Satan who can also be traced back to a time long anterior to
the supposed creation, when, at the head of an army of mutinous and wicked angels, he rebelled against God and was cast into Hell: the same Satan who tempted Eve and ever after was a hater of man as well as of God, the same Satan who was the primal cause of death and all its attending horrors as well as all the other ills to which the flesh has become heir.

It was not so long ago that certain diseases, the more mysterious, those in which there were few external symptoms, epilepsy, St. Vitus' dance, and others of that class, were directly attributed to some Satanic influence, the sufferers were "possessed of a devil."

There were demons, agents of Satan, everywhere, demons of the night, demons of the desert, demons who, thirsting for blood, got into human bodies and lived off of man's substance. Whole tribes of people became possessed, herds of swine! Demons? Why there were legions of them. And yet, while they deviled poor man and got into the way of Yahveh's will being done never do we find record of Satan or his minions waging a war against or even facing God directly. In fact a most efficacious exorcism was any prayer or series of phrases in which the name of the Almighty was mentioned, when Satan invariably had to retire. At all times, indeed, the circle in which he operated—Mephistopheles gives us an illustration of it—was well defined and always respected by him.

Satan lived in the fear of God, but that fear did not comprehend the Son of God, the Messiah. We find that it was permitted him to tempt Jesus. Jesus typified all that was good while Satan was the worthy representation of all that was bad—the old, old dualism! It was a constant struggle between them, and Jesus could never have established his Messianic character among his people, had it not been for those struggles in all of which, of course, was he signally victorious over the "enemy of God and of man."

Theologians have therefore been somewhat at a loss to account for the scant attention Jesus seemed to give to Satan and his office. It was not in accordance with the customs of the time. Temptations, sin, evil thoughts were, according to His people, the direct inspirations of Satan. Jesus, on the contrary, attributed them to man's own evil disposition or weakness. Nowhere did He speak of Satan as a reality. He used the name at times, but in the form of a parable, merely that His followers could more clearly understand His words. He did not even warn them to beware of Satan. He "virtually eliminated Satan from His teachings." His chroniclers have much to say about His exorcisms and His combats with Satan, but in the reports of His preachings and His works He is made to
say little or nothing anent Satan. So with Paul. The latter never combated the popular belief in a Devil but neither did he ever encourage it.

From the beginning of our era, however, can we date the great prominence, the most considerable part the Devil has ever played upon the stage of our world’s affairs, a part that he has kept up until less than a hundred years ago with scant abatement and but short waits between the acts. Who says that he was not a pretty important personage twenty years ago even? He played to smaller audiences, perhaps, but he was still a conspicuous character. The same old Devil, he assumed new guises as occasion demanded; he had changed somewhat from the time when he was a dual spirit with

THE EVIL SPIRIT OF THE WIND.
A Japanese conception.

the god of light, but “still the same old Satanas of our fathers, their nightmare, in whom was concentrated all impurity, all ugliness, all lies, all that was wicked, in fact the ideal of evil.”

Far from remaining in the semi-oblivion of symbol and personal inutility to which he had been relegated by Jesus and Paul, Satan grew to most wonderful prominence in the days succeeding their time. The Devil was indeed a palpable personality, the arch-enemy of the human species. He was elevated to being considered almost a rival of the Almighty’s, his pretentions were of course ridiculous, yet he was pretty powerful, He “thirsted for honors and domination and had imitated, well as he could, divine perfection, only to make an odious caricature of it, but a caricature that sufficed, neverthe-
less, to blind the world.” Tertullian’s epigrammatic description of Satan was an apt one: he intimated that Satan spent his time trying to imitate God’s powerful ways.

Nor was Christianity alone in giving so conspicuous a place to Satan. The world over morals had become pretty corrupt, kingdoms were decadent, the natural consequence was a reaction and a tendency among zealots of every race to ascetism, “a condition where one slowly kills the body under the pretext of developing the spirit,” a condition “where hunger becomes the physiological generator of imaginary beings having every appearance of reality.” Devils were evoked under every shape and in every clime. The rich were devils, the sensuous were certainly possessed, those who worshiped differently from him who looked upon them were as certainly offering prayer and sacrifice to devils, and so it went. Apollonius of Tyana exorcised devils just as much as did the sainted recluses and hermits of the Church.

The Jewish Messiah had become for Christianity “the saviour of culpable humanity,” and that is why the radical antagonism of Satan and the Messiah was reflected as it were, in the first doctrine of the redemption. It culminated, during many centuries, following the second A. D., into a grand drama in which Christ and Satan were the principal actors. Not only did the Son of God go down into hell and, being the stronger of the two, overcame the Devil and forcibly saved the souls of all those who had been awaiting his coming since Father Adam; but, by some inexplicable but well defined rights, all men—so taught Irenæus—since the Fall of man, were the rightful property of the Devil and had to be saved through some sort of bargain between Jesus and him. This may sound almost blasphemous, but I am only quoting the first fathers of the Church. Origen in fact goes further still and tells us that there was some trickery in that bargain, and Satan was not the guilty one!

The Devil in those times was a constant preoccupation to every Christian. When a child was baptized he “renounced the Devil and his works” and when any one was excommunicated he was “delivered to Satan.”

He soon after became palpable, a personality who readily assumed the appearance of flesh and blood. Augustine believed in a visible Devil, St. Victorian saw him in the guise of a charming maiden, St. Martin saw him masquerading as the Saviour Himself, and there were few saints who did not see him at least once in their lifetime.
Not long afterwards it became a sort of fad to make compacts with the Devil. St. Theophilus did and sorely repented it, and Satan who had gone up still another step in popular esteem, became a very Shylock in demanding that those contracts be fulfilled to the letter.

Christianized countries were ravaged by barbarians, and the Christians in turn conquered other barbarians; there was more or less mixing up with strangers, and weird, gross, polytheistic notions were interwoven with the Christian, and Satan was promoted another step. The Church tried to stem the tide but it was of no avail and soon the Church itself was contaminated.

A THINKING DEVIL.
From a Japanese Painting.

In the early ages there was something noble, elevating about the belief in a Devil; in the Middle Ages that belief became a stupid drivel. Every one could see him, saint or sinner; he strode about in human shape, horns upon his head, a cloven-hoof and spear-pointed tail, usually carried upon his left arm. Or, when more convenient to get about and into every corner, he assumed the form of a rat, a mouse, a black dog, a toad, or, more frequently still, his pet guise was as a wolf. Ah, what a holy deed it was to kill a wolf then!
There were three chances in five that you got the Devil as well as the wolf.

The Mohammedans, in the development of their theology, or whatever it can be called, introduced much "devilish" incantation and exorcism. For instance at Mecca, every year, each pilgrim during the feast of Kurban Bairam (March 29th) goes out to Muna, six hours away, and throws seven tiny pebbles at each of the three columns, as Abraham did of old, "to drive away the devil."

With the Jews just before our era, Satan was the direct antagonist of the Messiah who was to come; with the early Christians he confronted the Saviour of men, but "during the Middle Ages Jesus was far away, up in Heaven, and to His Church was bequeathed the task of undoing Satan's work." For several centuries then did the Church well wage that war. But it had to show results, people were not satisfied with exorcism and the assurance that the Devil had been cast out. So with Satan himself and his works the Church bothered itself very little; it turned its attention chiefly to ridding the world of those unfortunates who were "possessed" of devils. The Jew either was a devil or contained one, the heretic was undoubtedly possessed, the excommunicated man or woman certainly was and neither was there any question about the sorcerer and the witch. Some few were in part possessed, or for certain periods, for these there was some hope; prayer, fasting and, of course, the payment of certain sums to the Church could be depended upon to cure the ill; but, with the others, destruction was the only cure.

It is difficult for us to fully realize how all-pervading this Devil was during the Middle Ages. Did a door creak upon its hinges, or did a fly describe a zig-zag in its flight, the Devil had something to do with it, it forbode something. The Abbé Richeaume, in his Revelations of 130 chapters anent the Devil, written in 1270, tells us that devils are as thick about us as there are drops of water about a man in swimming. There was no parable about this, he was a high authority upon all matters diabolical and gives us some mathematically exact figures and most painfully accurate details about the subject. He also prescribed methods to rid one's self of many of these myriads of devils; prayer, holy water and salt were the best. Salt was a particularly good disinfectant, as it were. Devils could not abide salt. Indeed it was so very effective that much of it was placed in the holy water to help the latter out. A custom that still obtains, but I believe the salt is now added to keep the water from becoming stale.
This great familiarity with Satan soon bred contempt for him. Monks and priests and even laymen could easily get ahead of him in a bargain. He, it seems, was far from astute. The architects for the cathedrals of Cologne and of Aix-la-Chapelle got their ideas of those Churches from him, upon certain conditions that they were shrewd enough to finally wriggle out of. They got their plans and, as the small boy would say, the devil "got left." Contracts made with him were usually signed with the blood of the party of the first part. If a man's enemy met with success or good fortune all one had to do to get even with him was to accuse him of a pact with the Devil, the courts and the Church did the rest. Such accusations became powerful political weapons. We find much of that sort of thing being done from early in the fourteenth century. As soon as a Templar began to grow too powerful his rivals shook their heads and said they feared Satan had something to do with his wonderful
progress. Such reports quickly spread and grew, and the fortunate one was indeed lucky if he got off with a whole skin.

Popes John XXII, Gregory VII and Clement V were suspected of sorcery or dealings with the Devil. Joan of Arc, Euguerrand de Marigny and other as illustrious names were connected with his. Success in the field, in the arts, at the bar, anywhere, meant sooner or later that some one would, "in the name of Satan" drag one down.

Angela de Labarète was the first victim of this diabolical craze, an earnest, intelligent, high-minded and pure woman, she was nevertheless accused of sorcery and was burnt at the stake in Toulouse in 1275.

From 1320 to 1350 in Carcassonne alone there were four hundred such executions, for no other crime than that of being accused of dealing with Satan! But even then such horrors were mostly confined to a few localities where anti-Devil zealots did mostly congregate. It was in 1484 that all Christendom went crazy upon the subject. Innocent VIII in his act of that year, aimed at all those "who indulged in the dark arts of sorcery, or were otherwise agents of Satan," may be said to have "unloosed the dogs of hell." Then later, in 1523, Adrian VI added the commas and periods of refinement to that original bull and there was then in truth a very hell upon earth.

At Worms, at Geneva, at Hamburg, Ratisbon, Vienna, and in nearly every city of Europe were there such executions, judicial farces ending in the murder of innocent people, chiefly women,—it was claimed by the clergy and other connoisseurs that woman was far more prone to give herself away to the Devil than was man and in the light of to-day we can hardly find heart to blame her for preferring the Devil to such men, if she did.—In Italy a hundred such murders, in a city of ten thousand people, per year was not extraordinary. In Spain it was even worse. There a great number of people were condemned to the flames upon the testimony of two little girls of nine and ten years old, who declared they could see the Devil in the right eye of any one possessed of him, a sorcerer or a witch. Hundreds of suspects were marched before them and they picked out the victims, some of whom were little children of only six or seven years!

In England and Scotland it was nearly as bad. There were fewer cases but there was an aggravation, for politics were openly mixed in with religion and every one knew that the word "sorcerer" meant also some one's political rival to be gotten rid of.

One judge, in 1697, Nicholas Remy, used to boast that he had
committed nine hundred sorcerers and witches to the flames in fifteen years.

About this time, too, in Germany, this burning of witches, after forcing them to confess that they were possessed of devils, inspired some wise man with the notion that torture would be a splendid adjunct to a court to extract the truth from unwilling witnesses, and so it was enacted. Another, though indirect effect, or ill, we may lay to the door of our much maligned friend the Devil.

Of course, as in all crazes, there was a reaction. Small but in-
telligent forces had long been at work. There were some sane men even in those times. To hold notions contrary to those of the masses and their recognized leaders and teachers was, however, a good deal like breasting the surf in a terrific ocean tempest. Still, there were men who did it. A king of Hungary forbade his people to bother with the Devil, for there was none, he said. An old Lombard law said there should be no prosecutions of sorcerers there, such actions were persecutions. Agobard, archbishop of Lyons, declared that belief in sorcery was a relic of pagan absurdities, that the Devil was only a figure of speech to describe to the meanest intellects the evil that was in us. Father Spee, a learned Jesuit, by word and by writing denounced the crusade being waged against sorcery. He did succeed in having that fiery archbishop, Schoenborn of Mayence, moderate his edicts somewhat. A learned doctor, John Weier, wrote splendidly logical works against the craze. for craze it was. So did that famed French physician Gabriel Naudé.

Luther, for a reformer a sensible man, was disappointingly partial to the Devil and laid great stress upon the latter's prominent part in our affairs. He thoroughly believed in a real, old-time, live Devil. Calvin, of a more analytical turn of mind, cool, logical thinker, accepted the Devil as a sort of necessity of the times, more or less of a fact, but took him with very large doses of salt. He rarely mentioned him, excepting in the broadest allegorical or figurative sense.

To Balthasar Bekker, a pastor in an obscure Dutch church, belongs the honor of doing the most lasting work in getting rid of the Devil. He published a book in 1691 that appealed to the cooler minds, a celebrated work: inside of a few months it had been translated into every European language, was preached upon, commented upon, discoursed far and wide. To-day, in the broad light of modern thought and philosophy, that book still remains a very gem of logical refutation of all theories diabolical. It is full of such aphorisms as this: "...There is no sorcery excepting there where one believes there is; do not believe in it, and there will be none...." Poor Bekker! He was too liberal, he was thrown out of his church and died in distress and oblivion, but his book "went marching on."

The thinkers of the eighteenth century ridiculed the existence of a Devil, sorcery and the like: but ridicule is a poor weapon to use: you may make a man ashamed to acknowledge his belief before you, but you have not shaken his belief a bit, and furthermore you have made an enemy of that man. There was less inquisition, fewer
wholesale persecutions, but the Devil still cut a pretty considerable figure in things generally.

With the dawn of the nineteenth century there came a more widespread knowledge of nature: geography and astronomy were no longer closed books excepting to a very few who gloried in keeping the information a dark secret. People busied themselves with such matters, they no longer gave their whole attention to tilling the fields and to cutting each other’s throats when it suited the purposes of their rulers. With that growing intimacy with matters material, the certainty that Heaven was not located above a visible strata of clouds, that Hell was not in the bowels of the earth, there came a realization of the all-sufficiency of God, the Almighty Element, the Incomprehensible Fountain of all life, the Genius and Universality of all things, and men began to understand the true constitution of the universe, and that understanding dissipated the illusions that were the indispensable settings for the scare-crow that had been frightening them for ages, the old Satan.

In this twentieth century of ours there is still less place for him. Satan, as we have glanced at him in the last few pages, can truly be said to be a “has-been.” He may have served a purpose. It may have been expedient at one time to clothe our imperfections in such a guise and call our temptations, our evil inclinations, our worse selves by such a name. The mistake, the, for him, fatal mistake, was made when he or it, or whatever we wish to call whatever it is, was given a personality. The ultra-orthodox still cling to a semblance of him in that form, but it is only the spectre of a Devil. With visions, and miracles, and the other creepy, hair-raising, boogified things of our youth as a race, he, too, has been well to the front of the stage, scaring us the more every step he took toward us, until, getting too near the lights, it has been discovered that there was but a sheet-covered manikin worked by a man! The discovery created indignation, surprise, such tumult and uproar that the management has had to ring down the curtain for fear the people would tear down the house.

The Devil? Why, the man who worked the manikin did not even have time to pull the string that would have caused IT to give us a parting bow, as IT was unceremoniously hustled out of the way of the descending curtain.