

THE WAR FOR THE WORLD

BY MAXIMILIAN RUDWIN

AS the ruler of Heaven and the ruler of Hell are pitted against each other in an eternal combat for the mastery of the world, it is really a wonder that our earth, which, in this perennial war, has been constantly hurled to and fro between the two contending powers, has not long ago been shattered to pieces.

In this war for the world, it is man who is actually the bone of contention. The rivalry between the Eternal and the Infernal to win this planet has for its aim the possession of the human race, which is thus pulled in two different directions. The Lord tries his best to lift man upward, and Lucifer does his worst to drag him downward.

As soon as the Devil learned that the seats which he and his angels had vacated in heaven would be occupied by a new generation, of whom Adam and Eve were to be the parents, he determined to balk the sacred will of the Deity in regard to the destiny of man. From the moment Adam was created, he was tempted and tormented by Satan in body and soul. No sooner was Adam formed out of clay, so runs a Russian legend, than Diabolus, profiting by a moment when the Lord's dog was not watching, thrust seventy diseases into him. When Adam was given a woman, through her, Satan, disguised as a serpent, tempted him to sin, thus driving both of them out of Eden. By this master-stroke, Satan succeeded in wheedling out of God the assignment of the human race as his property. According to St. Augustine, man is condemned by the original sin and has become the Devil's legitimate prey. Satan thus turned man away from the path leading to Paradise and put him on the high-road to Hell. In this way, he clipped man's wings

so that he could not fly upward to fill the vacant seats in the celestial choir-stalls.

Encouraged by his first success, Satan continued to sow the seeds of sin in the newly formed earth. He induced Cain to murder Abel and even incited him to hurl stones on his brother's prostrate form. Satan survived the Deluge by hiding in Noah's Ark and was thus enabled to renew violence in the drunken curses of Noah. The Tempter again used woman as an accomplice. It was by working upon both the curiosity and jealousy of Noraita,¹ Noah's wife, that he managed to get on board the Ark. But he repaid her hospitality by treachery. There is an ancient tradition that, after having smuggled himself as a stowaway into Noah's Ark, Satan tried to sink it in order to do away with the human race for ever. This infernal project, however, was defeated, and the human race was saved by the hedgehog, who stuffed himself into the hole which the Devil had bored in the floor of the Ark.

Satan exhibited great activity in biblical times. He accused Abraham, and induced the Lord to test the patriarch by ordering him to sacrifice his son Isaac.² He was even bold enough to attempt to carry the body of Moses off to hell when the great Jewish lawgiver died, and fought over it with his old enemy, the archangel Michael. But the commander-in-chief of the heavenly militia, the hero of heaven, as this affair is recorded in the Epistle of Jude, did not bring any railing accusation against him, leaving it to the Almighty to rebuke his Adversary. Satan tempted Job in body and mind after having asked the Lord to put the poor man in his power. He indicted the Jews to their God and obtained through Ahasuerus the decree of annihilation against them in the days of Esther.³ But the Fiend was finally foiled, and the Jews were delivered from death through the vigilance of Mordecai.

Descending to earth to destroy the deeds of the Devil (1 John iii. 8), the Son of God was continually harassed and hampered in his mission by the hosts of hell. Satan, in his efforts to frustrate the providential purposes, persuaded the rabbis to persecute Jesus. After having failed with promises of power to win Jesus away from the Lord (Luke iv. 1-13; Mark i. 13), just as he had pre-

¹ In other versions, the name of Noah's wife is Naamah.

² Cf. Louis Ginzberg: *The Legends of the Jews* (4 vols., Philadelphia, 1909-25), I, 272.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, 415.

viously failed with Buddha and Zoroaster, he planned his death and, to this end, induced Judas to betray his Master (John xiii. 2). When Jesus died on the Cross, Satan was jubilant; and, ignorant of the real character of his victim, even dared to try to carry his soul off to hell. Satan, however, had no reason for rejoicing over this success. The death of the Saviour spelled the Devil's defeat. The kingdom of Satan was overthrown by the vicarious death of Christ on the Cross at Calvary.⁴ In the execution of his mission, Jesus, according to the old interpretation of several biblical passages (Acts ii. 31; Eph. iv. 8-10; Rom. x. 7; and especially 1 Pet. iii. 19), descended after his burial to hell, broke open its gates, set free its prisoners and put its ruler into "everlasting chains" (Jude 6; cf. 2 Pet. ii. 4). This act was performed "as a special punishment for his audacity in tempting and persecuting our Lord on earth or for some other unfathomable intention of the Lord for the salvation of his Church and his elect" (Suarez: *De angelis*; cf. also Gregory: *Moralium libri xxv*). The events of Christ's descent to hell are recorded in full detail in the apocryphal *Descensus Christi ad Inferos*, which forms the second part of the *Evangelium Nicodemii* (3rd cent.). This tradition took a strong hold on the popular mind and was considerably elaborated by the medieval poets and playwrights.⁵ The medieval English poem *The Harrowing of Hell* is a poetical treatment of this subject. The descent of Christ to hell forms an important part of the medieval mystery-plays of all European countries.⁶

The belief in Christ's Descent to Hell forms part of the Apostolic Creed. Many Protestant sects, however, have abandoned this belief and struck the words "He descended into Hell" from their creed. This denial of Christ's descent to hell is considered pure heresy by Bishop Thomas Bilson, who, in his *Survey of Christ's Suffering for Man's Redemption, and of His Descent to Hell* (1504), opposes the Puritan doctrine that Jesus suffered the pains of hell in his soul on the cross, and maintains that Christ actually went to hell "to destroy the Devil's kingdom."

⁴ The poet Cumberland treated the subject of Satan's overthrow at Calvary in his poem *Calvary* (1792).

⁵ Christ's Descent to Hell has in modern times been poetically treated by W. W. Lord in his poem, *Christ in Hades* (1851).

⁶ On the medieval stage, the Devil was often represented with a chain around his neck and with fetters on hands and legs, which symbolized his captivity.

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It would be wrong, however, for man to consider himself thus delivered from the Devil forever. Honesty compels us to admit that Satan's imprisonment in hell has in no way stopped his activity on earth. In fact, we can still see his tail wriggling in the world. It is all too evident that the Devil still enjoys the liberty of walking up and down the earth to molest mankind. The trier of men's souls, the tempter, is just as much "on the job" now, as he was in the days of Job. Although sealed at the bottom of the bottomless pit, his evil influence on the affairs of man has not suffered any diminution. The world's experiences of the past dozen or so of years should certainly uproot any belief we may have cherished that Satan is bound and sealed in some hellish solitude where he is superintending the tortures of the non-elect among humanity (Book of Enoch x. 37). The consensus of opinion among fundamentalist folk would be that the Evil Spirit now more than ever roams about on earth, "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8).

The Princedom of the Air, far from being overthrown by the vicarious death of Christ, seems, indeed, to have been in commission all through the ages down to the present day. The conduct of men and women in this world has never changed. Satan still lurks in the best and strongest of hearts and directs and controls men's minds and wills. This fact has led many thoughtful men to maintain that, as far as mankind is concerned, the Incarnation has been of no avail. If certain Protestant sects teach the truth by contending that Christ put into men's hands the power to resist the Tempter, it is evident, from all we know about human history from the death of Christ to this day, that very few men ever have availed themselves of this power.

It would almost seem that in this war for the world, the victory lies not with the Saviour but with Satan. Is Diabolus not still the prince of this world (John xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11; Eph. ii. 2, vi. 12), nay even the god of this world—*deus hujus sæculi* (2 Cor. iv. 4)? Do we not infer from another biblical passage that the authority over the world has been delivered to Satan, who can give it to whomsoever he will (Luke iv. 6)? The earth is recognized by the Church as the Devil's property. The chief ceremony in the consecration of a church is the expulsion of the Devil from the building. The demons thus driven from the interior of the church

perch themselves on its roof. This idea accounts for the gargoyles on the exterior of medieval cathedrals. The custom which prevailed in olden times of immuring a child in a new building is explained by the necessity of paying a purchase price to the Devil for the land on which it was erected.⁷ The Reformation in no way disputed the Devil's authority over this world. Martin Luther saw in Satan a real living power, who was incessantly working in human affairs. In the eyes of the German reformer, the Devil was the good Lord's hangman, and the instrument of the Almighty's anger and punishment. His famous hymn "Ein' feste Burg" (1529) breathes from the beginning to the end with the conviction of Satan's great power in the world. The English reformer, John Wycliffe, in his great treatise, *De dominio divino*, goes as far as to imply that here on earth God must obey the Devil. Anatole France, sceptic though he is, assures us that "the Old Enemy, the Spirit that denies, still holds such power in the spiritual world that even God must reckon with him. I will go further: that God, who fears him, has made him his steward" (*la Rotisserie de la Reine Pédauque*, 1893).

But, one may ask, do we not have scriptural sanction and orthodox authority for the belief that Christ conquered hell? This question refers to the Christian theory of salvation, which may thus be briefly summarized: All men, by reason of the Fall, became the rightful and exclusive property of Satan; and it would have been unjust on the part of the Deity to take from the Devil by violence that which was in reality his due. Satan, however, was willing to relinquish his claim to the human race on condition that Jesus should be given to him as the ransom price of humanity. But Heaven outwitted Hell in the bargain for man's redemption. When Satan got the price, he found that he could not keep it. In demanding Christ as payment, he did not know the dual nature of his price; and, as Rufinus so aptly puts it, in swallowing the bait (the humanity), he was tortured by the hook (the divinity) and was only too glad to relinquish both.⁸ Whether by fair dealing or foul,

⁷ A custom prevailed in England to hang consecrated palm crosses over the doors on Palm Sunday and put them into the purses in order to drive the devil out; cf. Wilhelm Mannhardt: *Baumkultus* (Berlin, 1875), pp. 291-92.

⁸ *The Devil's Lawsuit* written in the fourteenth century by the lawyer, Jacobus de Thermo, gives an excellent idea of the medieval interpretation of the Christian scheme of salvation. The evolution of the theory of salvation in the Church is thoroughly presented in Hastings Rashdall's *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London, 1919).

you will say, the fact remains that, through the death of the Saviour, man was redeemed from the power of Satan, and the victory was won by Heaven over Hell.

If we look at the world with open eyes, however, we cannot help believing that the contrary comes nearer to the truth. The ecclesiastics themselves believe that, in the eternal conflict between the Deity and the Devil for supremacy in this world, the latter gradually has been gaining the upper hand. The *Malleus maleficarum*,⁹ a large volume on the procedure in witchcraft cases, written by two Dominican Inquisitors appointed by Pope Innocent VIII, who, on December 4, 1484, issued the fatal bull against witchcraft, the famous "Summis desiderantes," contains the singular avowal that the Devil is constantly gaining ground, or, in other words, that the Deity is constantly losing ground; that man, who was destined to go to heaven, is rather headed downward. If such was the condition of affairs in the Middle Ages when the Church was supreme, how great must be the Devil's power over men today? It was a comparatively easy matter for man in the Middle Ages to make his escape from the jaws of Hell. The Catholic Church by its holy offices and blessed sacraments offered weapons of protection against the assaults of the enemy of mankind. The Devil was routed by the recitation of an *Ave Maria* or with a few drops of holy water.¹⁰

The monks exorcised the demons by singing the breviary hymns at vespers. The sign of the Cross was considered the surest defence against the snares and stratagems of malignant spirits. The very mention of the Lord often sufficed to put to flight the fiends of hell. But Satan, as Bret Harte remarks in his story, "The Devil and the Broker" (1867), is no longer scared by any holy signs. "The Christians," Voltaire said already a century and a half ago, "have lost the power to expel the Devil by the sign of the Cross." Indeed, Beelzebub no longer shudders behind his mask when the Cross confronts him, nor does he shrink from the test of holy water.

⁹ An English translation of this "Witch-Hammer," published in 1489, recently appeared in England under the ægis of the Reverend Montague Summers, an exponent of medievalism in modern times. A German translation of this book appeared in Berlin in 1905.

¹⁰ The story by Rabelais about the Devil in the holy-water basin is well known to all acquainted with the writings of that monk. A play entitled *le Diable dans un bénitier* written by Clémence Robert appeared in the fifties of the last century. The book, *le Diable dans le bénitier* (1926) by G. de la Fouchardière, the clever "columnist" of the Paris daily, *l'Oeuvre*, may well be called the Gospel according to Satan.

Furthermore, the saints in heaven gave succor to the penitent sinners. The Mother of God mediated between the evil-doer who prostrated himself at her feet and the wrath of the Lord provoked by his guilt. Even in his very last hour, the Catholic could escape Satan's clutches, no matter how closely he had been identified with him, by means of a skilfully added sum of pious externalities. But the Reformation robbed the saints of the power of intervention on behalf of the sinners and abolished all the ceremonies supposed to send Satan away from his victims. The German Reformer, Martin Luther, antagonized with all his might what he called the unbusiness-like and demoralizing relations of the Catholic Church to the powers of Heaven. In the Protestant Church, the Devil must have his pay, and the Devil's pay is the soul of the sinner. Thus, ever since the days of the Reformation, Satan's power in this world has considerably increased.

It is fully in conformity with the Christian creed when we see the paw of the Devil rather than the hand of the Deity in the affairs of men. The Church has always taught that the evil influence has a stronger hold upon mankind than the good influence. It is a part of the doctrinal system of the Church that Satan can and actually does exercise over man a greater power than God—physical as well as moral. The direction of human destinies lies in the hands of the Devil rather than of the Deity. "C'est le diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent," affirms the French poet, Charles Baudelaire. It is the Prince of the Pit who pulls the human puppets on this stage which we call the earth. The whole world lies in his grasp. He has bruised man's head. Apart from a few elect individuals, the whole human race, according to the Calvinistic creed, is doomed to hell.

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Many theories have been advanced to bring into harmony scriptural authority and practical experience. The Franciscans believed that the Fiend was in fact fettered for a full thousand years (Rev. xx. 2), but that after his millenary captivity, he was let loose again from hell to "deceive the nations" (Rev. xx. 3).¹¹ Certain demon-

¹¹ The French novelist, Maurice Magre, published a pseudo-medieval play, *l'An mille*, which deals with the current belief toward the end of the tenth century in the imminent second coming of Christ and the end of the world, which are to follow, according to Christian eschatology, the liberation of Satan from his millenary bondage. In this play, the harsh and pitiless fanaticism of the monks, the medieval spokesmen of the Deity, is opposed to the longings and aspirations of youth, which are encouraged by the wizard, who is the mouth-piece of the Devil.

ologists taught that it was only the Devil who was laid in chains by Christ, but that the demons have retained full liberty to go up to earth in order to carry out the plans of their chief. The effect on the affairs of men, however, is unchanged inasmuch as the Devil directs his work from his dungeon and effects his will among men through millions of messengers, who carry his commands to the ends of the earth with the rapidity of a flash of lightning.

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The demonologists further maintain that even the other great devils, for the most part, keep in a mystical seclusion and appear upon earth only in cases of the greatest urgency or when compelled to do so by conjuration. But they each have a number of legions of lesser devils at their disposal, who are their agents on earth. Certain grand devils have under them as many as twenty, thirty, forty or even fifty legions of inferior spirits; and each legion is composed of six hundred and sixty-six demons. The monarch of hell himself has at his command myriads of myrmidons, whom he sends out as his recruiting agents to the four corners of the earth to turn men's minds and steps downward instead of upward. The Devil, in his war with the Deity for the possession of the human race, has developed a monstrous passion for catching souls. He directs all his efforts toward enlarging his kingdom (*Dr. Faustus* v. 40).

The messengers of hell aim to counteract the messengers of heaven. When man's guardian angel whispers good counsel into his right ear, a demon is always near to whisper evil counsel into his left ear. The angel and the demon thus carry on a debate across man's brain over the merits and demerits of a certain act. He who advances the stronger arguments wins. In the Catholic Church, namely, each act of man is accounted for by the whispering of either a good or a bad angel. From the days when Athanasius related the life of St. Anthony in devil-fighting heroics, man's evil thoughts and acts have always been considered by the theologians as the machinations of the evil spirits.

In addition to prompting men to sin by whispering evil counsel into their ears, the demons also enter into their bodies to possess their souls. It is a part of the doctrinal system of the Church that the Devil has the power to enter both men and beasts, but can be driven from his human habitation by the conjuration of the pious.

Indeed, a man's piety was judged by the power he had to drive the Devil out. It was believed that the Devil slipped into the body of a man together with the food he swallowed.¹² One interesting feature of diabolical possession is that, though always on the watch to aid the evil-doers, the Devil, having entered the body of a person, proceeds to reveal his victim's secret sins. The stories of demoniac possession are numerous, from that of Mary of Magdala, who harbored at least seven demons in her heart (Luke viii. 2), to the nuns of Loudun, who received frequent visits from the evil powers in the year of our Lord sixteen hundred and thirty-three.¹³

On the other hand, the demons of hell can be conquered by man and imprisoned in black bottles. This conception of a demon enclosed in a phial of black glass hails from the Orient.¹⁴ The Asiatics believed that, by abstinence and special prayers, evil spirits could be reduced into obedience and imprisoned. This tradition is frequently found in esoteric works and forms a part of the Solomonic lore. In the cabalistic *Vinculum spirituum*, a book of Eastern origin, it is said that Solomon discovered, by means of a certain learned volume, the valuable secret of inclosing in a bottle of black glass three millions of infernal spirits, with seventy-two of their kings, of whom Beleh was the chief, Beliar (*alias* Belial) the second, and Asmodeus the third. Solomon afterwards cast the bottle into a deep well near Babylon. Fortunately for the contents, the Babylonians, hoping to find a treasure in the well, descended into it, broke the bottle, thus permitting the emancipated demons to return to their ordinary element.¹⁵ The art of imprisoning an evil spirit in a phial of black glass is also mentioned by Gervase of Tilbury, Gerson, Ariosto, Bodin, Agrippa and Palingenius. The *motif* of a demon

¹² Cf. Julius Lippert: *Christentum, Volksglaube und Volksbrauch* (Berlin, 1882), p. 561.

¹³ The reader will find a good account in English of this most interesting case of diabolical possession in modern times in the article "The Devils of Loudun," *National Review*, vol. XI (London, 1860), pp. 70-93, which is an unsigned review of the book in four volumes entitled *Histoire du merveilleux dans les temps modernes* by Louis Figuier, which appeared that year in Paris.

¹⁴ Naturally, there can be no question of a bottle in the early form of this belief. Glass was not known in the desert. We need but refer to the story of Aeolus and his bag of winds. The Asiatics imprisoned the demons in goat-skins. Anybody can see that wind comes out of a black "goatskin" cloud. In Abyssinia, the Abouna blows a skin full of his breath, which is then tied up, and with a puff from which priests are ordained in that country.

¹⁵ Cf. *The Little Key of Rabbi Solomon, containing the Names, Seals and Characters of the Seventy-Two Spirits with whom he held Converse, also the Art Almadel of Rabbi Solomon, carefully copied by "Raphael."* London, 1879.

enclosed in a liquid container occurs also in the tale of the Fisherman and the Djinn,¹⁶ which will be found in the *Arabian Nights* and which was also treated by the German poet Klopstock in his poem "Winter märchen" (1778.)

This legend of an imprisoned demon was introduced into Spain from the East by the Moors and finally acclimated to find a place in local traditions. From Spain it spread over the whole of Europe. This idea will be found in the work of the Spaniard Luis Velez de Guevara called *El Diablo Cojuelo* (1641), from whom Alain LeSage borrowed both title and plot for his work *le Diable boiteux* (1707). This *motif* has also been employed by Fouqué in his tale *Das Galgenmännlein* (1810), and by Fernan Caballero in her version of the Andalusian legend, "The Devil's Mother-in-Law" (1859), and by Robert Louis Stevenson, in his story, "The Bottle Imp" (1891.)

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The demons of hell tempt men of all classes and callings. They do not distinguish between prince and pauper, philosopher and fool. "It must not be thought," assures us Charles Baudelaire, "that the Devil tempts only men of genius. He doubtless scorns imbeciles, but he does not disdain their assistance. Quite the contrary, he finds great hopes on them." Although aiming to bring all men to destruction, the demons feel a particular delight in leading a good man to sin. Their greatest triumph, as Brother Palemon says in Anatole France's novel, *Thais* (1890), is "to sow black and bitter thoughts in the heart of a good man." Among all good people it is the priests whom the Devil persecutes most, because they teach, as the French master has said, that "God takes delight in seeing his creatures languish in penitence and abstain from his most precious gifts" (*les Dieux ont soif*, 1912). Even within the sacred walls of the monasteries and convents, the holy men and women are not safe against Satan's snares (2 Tim. ii. 26). "The Devil is more busy in the monasteries," we are told by Joris-Karl Huysmans, in his novel, *En route* (1895), "than in the cities, as he has a harder job on hand." Another reason for his greater activity in cloisters than in clubs and class-rooms is that he prefers to work among priests rather than among laymen. The priests cannot find safety from Satan's snares even at the very altar. In Alphonse Daudet's story,

¹⁶ Djinn, jinns or genii are the chief race of spirits (some good, some malignant) with which Arabian mythology has peopled the world.

"les Trois messes basses" (1889), we learn how the Devil, assuming the form of the little clerk Garrigou, describes to the officiating priest the magnificent meal that is awaiting him at the castle after he has read the three masses and, by ringing a little bell, seems to say constantly, "Hurry up, hurry up, the sooner we finish here, the sooner will we be at table." The priest cannot get his mind off the excellent dishes; he hurries through the holy service, swallowing words, jumping over passages until he is finally through and, with a sigh of relief, says "*Ita missa est.*" He eats that night so much that he dies without having repented of his sin. He is not admitted to heaven until he has read three hundred masses in his own chapel in presence of all who have sinned through his fault for the one mass that he has stolen. One can still hear all this in the chapel on Christmas night.

On the other hand, Satan often renders good services to the clergymen. In fact, the Fiend seems to be rather fond of the gentlemen of the cloth and seeks their company a good deal. It is told that a Scotch minister was riding home one day through a wood when Satan called out to him, and warned him not to eat a poisoned chicken which his wife was ignorantly cooking for his supper. Diabolus has often substituted for many a preacher who was prevented from preaching his sermon on a Sunday morning. Lord Morley recently told the French story of the monk who was a particular friend of the Devil. One Sunday morning, the monk was too ill to preach, and as Diabolus chanced to appear in the sacristy for a chat with his frocked friend, the latter asked that obliging person to occupy his pulpit for the special edification of his congregation. The Devil preached a most masterly sermon, covering himself with shame and confusion. "How now?" said the monk when the Devil came down, "you have pretty nearly ruined yourself with that sermon."—"Oh! dear no," replied the Devil, "no harm done, no harm done; there was no unction in it."^{16a} As may be seen from this story, the Devil's speech to St. Guthlac, the Irish St. Anthony, is not the only instance extant of a diabolical sermon. Diabolus is said to have preached a sermon, among *others*, in the church of North Berwick, and has occupied pulpits in other countries than England. In fact, the Fiend is famed as a pulpit orator. Satan's general oratorical ability renders further comment superfluous. Lord

^{16a} Quoted from by Mr. John O'London in the *New York Times Book Review* for 1921.

Broughman, as we know, recommended Satan's speeches to bar-risters and parliamentarians.

The Devil is also a frequent visitor in nunneries. But he often finds his match among the holy women. Father Eisen, in his book, *Ancient Origin of the Festival of the Body of Christ*, tells us that the sister nuns of Cornelia Juliana often heard in her cell a prodigious noise caused by the frequent fights she had with the Fiend, whom she would seize and thrash with all her might, trampling him under foot and bitterly reviling him.¹⁷

It will perhaps be permitted us to offer here in full a very interesting Provençal legend about the temptation of a nun, retold a quarter-century ago in English verses by a Manchester poet, B. H. Berti:

“The good folks in Provence the story oft tell,
How the Devil once tapt at a Nun's holy cell,
When began the night-raven to croak;—
In a Monk's cowl his horns and black features he veil'd,
His huge cloven feet and fork'd tail were conceal'd
In a long spreading sanctify'd cloak.

“‘Father Peter is come to absolve thee of sin’;
Said the arch-fiend, and stifled a horrible grin,
‘Confession and tears I require!’
The Nun drew the latch;—in the cell-bolt he came,
His garments flew off in a blue sulph'rous flame,
His eyes roll'd like meteors of fire.

“With terror she shriek'd at his horns and his tail:—
‘In the name of the Virgin! thy purpose reveal;
‘O Jesu! preserve my poor soul!’
With long ave-maries the fiend seem'd dismay'd,
Full of wrath he breath'd forth noxious steams, and display'd
In his black iron claws a red scroll.

“‘Thy soul's all I want—these few articles sign,
‘And ev'ry delight of this life shall be thine,
‘All hell to thy pleasure shall kneel!’
‘O fie! prince of darkness, 'tis not quite polite
‘To pay court to a lady, in such a sad fright;
‘Prithee take off that strange deshabilité!’

¹⁷ A very beautiful medieval legend about the Devil in a nunnery will be found in the collection of stories published by Mr. F. O. Mann under the title *The Devil in a Nunnery and Other Medieval Tales* (1914). This story has also been reprinted in the present writer's anthology of *Devil Stories* (New York: Knopf, 1921).

“The demon then vanish’d, and shortly up sprung,
 Strangely alter’d indeed, he was comely and young,
 In a dress quite cut out *à-la-mode*:—
 ‘Well, you’re something at last, you look handsome and spruce;
 ‘And now, my dear Devil, the writings produce,
 ‘Let us see what new joys they forebode!

“‘Hey day, fourteen years! why the time is too short,
 ‘These walls while I live can yield frolic and sport,
 ‘Then away with thyself and thy bond!’
 ‘Go to,’ said the tempter, ‘to sign prithee haste;
 ‘Fly, fly from these cloisters, and true pleasure taste
 ‘Midst my vot’ries, who form the *beau monde*!’

“‘Dear Sir, you’re outbid, and your tongue’s of no use;
 ‘In transports the purest this world can produce
 ‘Friar Lewis and I nightly revel!
 ‘Take your blood-written scroll; take your curst scarlet bait!’
 ‘Ah!’ mutter’d the fiend, and went shaking his pate,
 ‘A Nun has more wit than the Devil!’”

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The emissaries of heaven and the emissaries of hell frequently engage in a pugilistic battle over the souls of men at their death, similar to that carried on by Michael and Satan over the body of Moses (Jude 9).¹⁸ According to medieval tradition the two parties contending for our souls, often resort to gambling as a means of settling their disputes. In the pseudo-medieval mystery-play *le Prince des sots* (1803) by Gérard de Nerval, an angel throws dice with the Devil, with human souls as the stakes. The angel cheats, through excess of zeal, with the object of taking back as many of his friends as possible into Paradise. The Devil in the end loses his temper, calls the angel “great gawky fellow, sly fool,” and threatens, if he catches him again at his tricks, to pull every feather out of his wings, so that he will be unable to fly back to his Master.

¹⁸ The devils and angels are often shown in the Italian plays in conflict over the souls of mortals, with varying success, according to the virtues of the souls in question. In the play *The Virgin Martyr* by Massinger and Dekker (1622), a struggle between the good and the bad angel, who followed a man through life, is continued over his soul after his death. Good and evil demons were also wont to fight over the souls of mortals in the drama of the Buddhists. In Edouard d’Anglemont’s poem, “l’Ame du Moine” (1829), the Devil fights, near the old abbey of Saint-Ouen situated on the banks of the Robec river, over the soul of an unworthy monk, who has just died, with his guardian angel, who maintains that the monk repented when he was on the point of death. Robert sans Peur, the Duke of Normandy, arbitrates between the two parties, and decides in favor of the angel.

Baudelaire, in his story, "le Joueur généreux" (1864), tells how he himself gambled with the Devil for his own soul.^{18a} Satan is famed as the greatest gambler ever known upon or under the earth.¹⁹ He taught the Roman soldiers how to cast lots for the raiment of Jesus (John xix. 24). Old Nick invented playing cards, which are therefore often called the Devil's Bible; and it is he also who invented dice, which are sometimes termed the Devil's bones.²⁰ Mr. H. G. Wells, in his novel *The Undying Fire* (1919), has Diabolus play chess with the Deity in heaven.

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Satan, on account of his search for souls, has often been portrayed in popular legend as a fisherman. There is a long poem entitled "The Devil Fishing," from which we will quote the first three verses:

"The Devil sat by the river's side,
The stream of Time, where you'll always find him—,
Casting his line in the rushing tide
And landing the fish on the bank behind him.

"He sat at his ease in a cozy nook,
And was filling his basket very fast;
While you might have seen that his deadly hook
Was differently baited for every cast.

"He caught 'em as fast as a man could count;
Little or big, it was all the same.
One bait was a cheque for a round amount;
An assemblyman nabbed it, and out he came."

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The Devil was wont to carry off the souls that belonged to him

^{18a} There is an allegory representing Satan playing with a man for the latter's soul in Carl Miltitz's *Die Schauspieler*. Illustrations by Moritz Retzsch. The title and text are printed in German, French and English.

¹⁹ An excellent story about Beelzebub as a golf player is Charles Deulin's "The Devil's Round" (1874), reprinted in the collection of *Devil Stories* already mentioned.

²⁰ In Eduard d'Anglemont's legend, "la Partie de dés" (1833), Satan plays dice, in the ruins of the monastery of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, with the saint over a manor which has been bequeathed to the abbey and over the possession of which the two have long disputed with each other. The Devil shows a pair-royal of six, but the abbot is not dismayed and produces a pair-royal of seven.—As a dice player, Satan is the successor to Woden.

in a basket, as may be noted on the doorway of the Cathedral of Fribourg in Switzerland, where he is represented with a pig's head, a crook in his hand, and a rag-picker's basket on his back.²¹ He was so certain of his prey that he was accustomed to leave his basket open. When he observed, however, that many souls managed to run off, he put a heavy cover and a good padlock on the box. But the cover did not prevent the souls from escaping. Aided by the rosy fingers of the cherubs, they found a way of sifting through the wicker-work of the basket. When the Devil realized his loss of souls, he slew a dromedary, and with the skin of the hump contrived a leather sack, into which he crammed as many souls as he possibly could find. "It is usually in Upper Egypt," says Victor Hugo, who has incorporated this legend in his beautiful story of the Bold Pecopin (in *le Rhin*, 1842), "by the shores of the Red Sea, after going his rounds among pagans and unbelievers, that the Devil fills his leather bag." But one day as he was promenading on the shore of the Red Sea, St. Medard saw Satan carrying on his back a bag full of damned souls. The heart of the saint was filled with compassion for the poor souls, and he quickly slit the Devil's bag open, whereupon the souls scrambled for liberty:

"Away went the Quaker.—Away went the Baker,
 Away went the Friar—that fine fat Ghost,
 Whose marrow Old Nick had intended to pick
 Dressed like a Woodcock, and served on toast!

"Away went the nice little Cardinal's Niece
 And the pretty *Grisettes*, and the Dons from Spain,
 And the Corsair's crew, and the coin clipping Jew,
 And they scamper'd, like lamplighters, over the plain!"
 —From *The Ingoldsby Legends, or Mirth and Marvels*.

In the medieval mystery plays, each demon is represented as bringing an individual soul and narrating the sin which condemned it to hell. In many plays, a long procession of such souls is shown, representing all classes and professions, from princes to paupers. Among the sinners whom the demons in the medieval drama carry off to hell, amidst the clattering of caldrons, we meet peers and

²¹ The conception of the Devil carrying lost souls to hell, common to all forms of medieval literature, may be traced back as far as the apocryphal Vision of St. Paul (4th cent.). The Devil inherited his basket from Thor, who carried a basket slung over his shoulders when he went on his journeys among men.

peasants, dukes and dustment, admirals and artisans, bishops and boilermakers, millionaires and milliners, judges and jobbers. In the Redentin Easter Play of 1484, a priest who has been dragged into hell is able, by the vapor of incense and by his curses, to drive even the Devil into a corner so that he is only too glad to let his victim go. In his distribution of punishments to representatives of the various classes, Lucifer pronounces the severest penalties on the cheating craftsmen. The tavern-keeper who fails on earth to give a full measure of beer to his customers is certain in hell to be offered a hot beverage composed of oil, molten lead, pitch and sulphur.

It may thus be seen that the war for the world between the Almighty and the Adversary is still waging as strong as ever, and that Satan has not wholly been subdued by the Saviour. The jaws of hell are still open to swallow the sinners, and the Church is right in continuing to threaten us with pitch and brimstone.