

THE FRANCIAN FIEND

BY MAXIMILIAN J. RUDWIN

OF THE more important literatures of Europe, the literature of France has until recently not been very successful in its attempts at a representation of the Devil. The Frenchman, in contrast to his neighbors East and West, has been slow to understand the soul of Satan. In vain will we look in French literature for a devil worthy to take his place with Dante's Dis, Calderon's Lucifer, Milton's Satan, and Goethe's Mephistopheles. We would bring eternal shame on the heads of these noble chiefs of the Infernal Kingdom if we were to place at their side that charlatan and arch-bohemian, Le Sage's Asmodeus. What a miserable showing would Chateaubriand's Satan make in this august company! Why, we blush to think how he would sustain a conversation with his Miltonic model. The sophisticated and sentimental Satans of the French Romantic School would cut no better figure in the presence of the diabolical creations of other countries. Nor is Baudelaire's Beelzebub a very imposing character. He is but a dandy devil and a Beau Brummel of the boulevards.

It has been reserved for Anatole France, the first of contemporary French writers and perhaps the world's greatest man of letters of today to present his country with a devil who is every inch the equal of any that ever issued forth from the mind of man. He is indeed *primus inter pares*. A prevision of this distinction must have stirred within our author when he chose as a pseudonym the name of his country.

It is a remarkable fact that this latter-day exponent of the spirit of doubt and denial should be so interested in this Christian character. This sceptic is simply haunted by the spirtual and supernatural, by the marvellous and mysterious. This rationalist feels the common man's craving for the credulous. Anatole France holds that

the supernatural fills an essential need of man. In his essay, "Hypnotism in Literature" (1887),¹ we read as follows:

"The feeling of the marvellous is innate in us, and neither the scientific temper nor metaphysical speculations can wholly demolish it. . . . The seventeenth century in France, with its Cartesian philosophy, is the only age I know of which willingly and easily dispensed with the marvellous. Reason then dominated men's minds. It dominated them still in Voltaire's time. But its dryness appeared. . . . I want to be amused, and I believe that there is no happiness without illusion. The truth is that it is not from magicians and spirits but from novelists and poets that we must ask the way to the unknown world. . . . It is from new Apuleiuses, it is from Hoffmanns and Edgar Poes that we shall ask initiations to the mysteries."

What Sainte-Beuve said of Chateaubriand applies with greater truth to Anatole France, "a pagan with a Catholic imagination." In contrast to that other anti-Christian, Leconte de Lisle, whom he greatly admired,² our author is not so much interested in the pagan religions as in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. He studied *con amore* biblical archæology and hagiology. The learning of this most cultivated of contemporary men of letters ranges from classical writings to patristic, cabalistic and esoteric literatures, and from ancient myths to modern mystifications. Monachism has always been his special weakness, and he has again and again returned to this subject.

Anatole France is as diligent as inquirer into the selenography of the unknown as into the geography of the known. To this relativist, who holds a belief in the universal flux of things and in man's inability to discover any moral or intellectual order in the universe, the word and the conception "supernatural" are but meaningless. Where substance is reduced to shadow, shadow may be taken as substance. If the known world is but a vast illusion, the dream of a dream, the unknown world may be a reality. From this fact results this sceptic's belief in the scientific possibility of invisible beings ("Mad Folk in Literature," 1887).³ All is equal, this spiritual son of Renan teaches: nothing matters. "From his high observation-tower, the visions of fanatical saints appear on a level with the great political revolutions and social reformations of mankind."

¹ *On Life and Letters*, vol. I (1888). Quotations in this article are taken from the uniform English translation of the works of Anatole France published by John Lane, London and New York, 1902ff. The titles are given in their English equivalents.

² Anatole France consecrated to Leconte de Lisle his first article in 1867 and six years later dedicated to him his first book.

³ See Note 1.

Anatole France is especially interested in the epochs of the Thebaid and of the first saints and martyrs of France and Italy. But he is not loath to seek the supernatural also in modern times.

Already in his boyhood, Anatole France felt profoundly the poetic charm of Catholic legend. He was brought up on biblical stories and the Lives of the Saints. He read them at his mothers' knee, and the love of these quaint old legends has never left him. He started his literary career with the *Legend of Saint Radegunde, Queen of France*, which he wrote as a school-exercise in his fifteenth year. It must be admitted, though, that he often caricatures the legends he loved so well in his earlier days. He employs the Golden Legend as a satirical means. In his hands the supernatural element of the Christian religion is a weapon borrowed from his enemies to be used against them.

What most interested Anatole France as a boy in the Catholic world of marvel and mystery was the personality of the Devil. Legions of horned demons, he tells us, in his autobiographical *Pierre Nozière* (1899), danced their rounds in his childish imagination. He would often mistake his eider-down coverlet for a devil. It was his grandmother who filled his mind with tales of demons. Sceptic though she was, our author tells us, she held a pretty strong belief in the Devil and the Black Bogey (*My Friend's Book*, 1885). This belief in Beelzebub has been repeatedly asserted by Anatole France himself. This scoffer at all things sacred firmly believes in a personal devil. But how meaningless is the word "belief" when we deal with a writer, who, though denying man an immortal soul, exclaims: "I believe in the immortal soul of Punch!" But even if the Devil never existed, he exists now as the creation of Anatole France. His hypothetical reply to a monk, who might tell him of the Devil, we may well apply to the author himself: "If an old monk came to me and said, 'I have seen the Devil; he has two horns and a tail,' I should make reply to that same monk and say, 'Father, even supposing the Devil did not exist already, you have created him. He exists now without a shadow of a doubt. Take care that he does not have you.'" (*Ibid.*)

Anatole France is of the opinion that we could not get along without the Devil. He shares the belief of the German mystic Jacob Boehme that "God can be known only through evil." Again and again our author stresses the point that evil is an indispensably necessary element in the economy of the universe. The history of the world has shown that the supposedly opposed realms of human

activity personified in the Almighty and his Adversary are equally essential and eternal. How could we indeed be good without the pitchfork? With the passing of the Devil, all life would disappear from the face of the earth. Our author would not be comforted when he saw the Devil apparently dead. In his autobiographical *My Friend's Book*, he tells us that one day he took his baby girl Suzannah to a Punch and Judy show, which ended in the death of the Devil.⁴ This canonical ending delighted the common crowd, but it saddened our philosopher. He said to himself:

"The Devil dead, good-bye to sin! Perhaps Beauty, the Devil's ally, would have to go also.⁵ Perhaps we should never more behold the flowers that enchant us; and the eyes for the love of which we would lay down our lives.⁶ What, if that is so, what in the world would become of us? Should we still be able to practise virtue? I doubt it. Punch did not sufficiently bear in mind that Evil is the necessary counterpart of Good, as darkness is of light, that virtue wholly consists of effort, and that if there is no more any Devil to fight against, the Saints will remain as much out of work as the Sinners. Life will be mortally dull. I tell you that when he killed the Devil, Punch committed an act of grave imprudence.

"Well, Pulchinello came on and made his bow, the curtain fell, and all the little boys and girls went home; but still I sat on deep in meditation. Mam'zelle Suzanne, perceiving my thoughtful mien, concluded that I was in trouble. . . . Very gently and tenderly she takes hold of my hand and asks me why I am unhappy. I confess that I am sorry that Punch has killed the Devil. Then she puts her little arms round my neck, and putting her lips to my ears, she whispers:

"I tell you somefin: Punch, he killed the nigger, but he has not killed him for good.'"⁷

"Yes," our author affirms in his essay, "Virtue in France" (1887,⁸ "evil is immortal. Satan, the genius, in whom the old theology in-

⁴ Payne Collier (*Punch and Judy*, 5th ed., London, 1870, p. 66) mentions a marionette-player who had religious scruples about making Punch kill the Devil, but the audience were so attached to the canonical ending that they hooted and mishandled him. On the origin of this ending the reader is referred to F. M. Cornford, *The Origin of the Attic Comedy* (London, 1914), p. 146.

⁵ According to the Church Fathers the Devil lurks behind all beauty.

⁶ St. Cyrian saw the Devil in a flower.

⁷ Quoted from the present writer's anthology of *Devil Stories* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), pp. 322-3. Anatole France need not have been so wrought up over the death of the Devil. According to a popular poem, the first stanza of which follows, he has a wife who is fully able to carry on his work after his death:

"The Devil is dead. He died serene,
Though somewhat oppressed by cares;
But his wife, my friends, is a woman of mind—
She looks after her lord's affairs."

⁸ See note 1.

carnates it, will survive the last man and remain alone, seated with folded wings, upon the ruins of extinct worlds."

"Evil is necessary," our author insists again. "If it did not exist, neither would good. Evil is the sole potential of good. . . .

"It is thanks to evil and sorrow that the earth is habitable and that life is worth living. We should not therefore be hard on the Devil. He is a great artist and a great *savant*; he has created at least one-half of the world. And his half is so cunningly embedded in the other that it is impossible to interfere with the first without at the same time doing a like injury to the second. Each vice you destroy had a corresponding virtue, which perishes along with it.

"I enjoyed the pleasure of seeing, one day, at a country fair, the life of St. Antony the Great represented by marionettes. . . . Oh, how vividly it brings before us the two things working together to one end.—God's grace and the Devil's!

"St. Antony is a great Saint only because he successfully resisted the Queen of Sheba. Well, is it not obvious then that in sending this beauteous lady . . . the Devil indispensably performed an act which was indispensably necessary to constitute his Saintship?

"Thus the marionettes confirmed me in my belief that evil is an indispensable pre-condition of good, and the Devil a necessity for the moral beauty of the universe." (*The Garden of Epicurus*, 1895.)

"Evil is necessary," Anatole France repeats himself again. "It has like good its source in human nature, and the one cannot be destroyed without the other." (*M. Bergeret in Paris*, 1901.)⁹

What distinguishes the Francian Fiend from the Romantic devils is the fact that idealized and divinized as he is he remains a devil. He is a god of grace, a lord of love, a luminous genius of reason,¹⁰ a lover of learning, a patron of art, a pioneer of progress, a great philosopher,¹¹ a sound theologian,¹² a strong logician,¹³ and dialectic-

⁹ It was under the influence of Anatole France that our James Huneker has written the following praise of the Prince of the world: "The Devil is the mainspring of our moral system. Mock him and you mock God—who created him. Without him the world would be all light without shadow, and there would be no art, no music—the Devil is the greatest of all musicians. He created the chromatic scale—that is why Richard Wagner admired the Devil in music—what is *Parsifal* but a version of the Black Mass?" (*Bedouins*, 1920.)

¹⁰ "Thought led Satan himself to revolt, and still Satan was a son of God." (*The Well of St. Claire*.)

¹¹ "Satan was the first philosopher." (Hebbel.)

¹² The Devil "is a great theologian." (*Penguin Island*.) "The Devil definitely remains the only doctor who has not yet been refuted." (On Skepticism," in *On Life and Letters*, vol. I, 1888.)

¹³ "We remember the memorable saying of the Devil, 'I also am a logician.'" (*Ibid.*) "The Devil understands logic." (Heine in *Elementargeister*.) The poet Verlaine calls Satan "the old logician."

cian,¹⁴ and withal a devil.¹⁵ What Ivan Karamazov says of his own devil holds just as good of this Teacher and Tempter. "If you undressed him, you would be sure to find a tail—a long and smooth tail, like that of a Dutch hound." And our devil has a cloven hoof, too.¹⁶

Anatole France's Devil is a new species of the *genus diabolus*. He is an original character, sprung full blown from the most civilized mind in the world today. In his mockery of mankind he proves himself to be a descendant of Mephistopheles, but in contrast to Goethe's devil who always denies, the Francian Contradictor now denies and now affirms, but whatever he says, he says conditionally. He is neither the Everlasting Nay nor the Everlasting Yea. He will commit himself to no fixed principles. What he delights in is to confound and contravert. He is a hair-splitting demon, a devil of fine shades. The Subtle Doctor is a Pangloss who has sat at the feet of Renan. He is now good, now evil, or, which is still better, neither good nor evil. Like his creator, he is merely what he is. But we must not look for a consistent conception of the Devil in the work of a fluid thinker, who can hold simultaneously two divergent views on any subject.

BALTHASAR (1889)

The Queen of Sheba, who charms Balthasar as she charmed Solomon, is a demoness. She "hides her cloven hoof under a trailing skirt embroidered with pearls" (*The Garden of Epicurus*). According to rabbinical legend she is Lilith, the Goddess of Hell, whom Eastern tradition affirms to have been Adam's first wife.¹⁷ According to a medieval legend it was this serpent-woman who tempted Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit, as Satan seduced Eve.

¹⁴ The Devil is a good controversialist. He disputed with the archangel Michael, contending about the body of Moses (Jude 9). "You must not discuss with him, however good a reasoner you may be, you will be worsted, for he is a most tricky dialectician." (Huysmans in *En route*, 1895.)

¹⁵ "Satan is an incomprehensible personage. He thinks like a medieval monk and a modern philosopher; his mind is philosophical and yet it is full of impishness." (Anatole France.)

¹⁶ "He has—excuse my saying it—hoofs and a tail behind, but he has more brains than many a student." (Anton Chekhov in *The Shoemaker and the Devil*.)

¹⁷ See L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. I, p. 233, and *Devil Stories*, p. 317f. Consult also J. Halévy, *la Légende de la reine de Saba*, Paris, 1905. (*Annuaire de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes: Section des Sciences historiques et philosophiques*.) The kernel of the legend of the Queen of Sheba is found in I Kings x. 1-3. Mr. A. S. Freidus, of the New York Public Library, has published "A Bibliography of Lilith," in the *Bulletin of the Brooklyn Entomological Society*, vol. XII (1907), No. 1.

THE DAUGHTER OF LILITH (1889)¹⁸

The Daughter of Lilith is a modern version of the legend of the Venusberg. A deathless daughter of the demoness Lilith comes up to earth and attaches herself to a young Parisian. It needs all the exorcism of the curé Safrac to purify this modern Tannhäuser from his relations with the new Venus. This immortal and fatal maiden envies her half-sisters, the daughters of Eve, and prays for death that she may also enjoy life, and for remorse that she may also know pleasure.

THAIS (1890)

Thais, written under the influence of Flaubert's *Temptation of St. Antony*, is a bitter satirical attack against Christian asceticism. The author aims to show how the suppression of natural instincts has for its results the exact contrary of its expectations. The book has been called half museum, half pandemonium.

Paphnutius, a holy hermit of the Thebaid, praying in his cell, is haunted by the recollections of the talented actress and beautiful courtesan Thais, seen in the theater of Alexandria and admired by him in the flower of his years, and his spirit moves him to return to the city in order to undertake her conversion. He abandons his cell and his hair-shirt, goes to Alexandria, visits Thais, resists the seduction of her beauty and accomplishes his mission. The courtesan is unhappy and superstitious and lends an ear to the words of her former admirer. She repents of her sins, renounces the world and the flesh and turns back to the Christian God. Paphnutius conducts his penitent to a convent and returns to the desert. But alas! he finds no contentment any longer in his cell. He has taken with him the dangerous image of her beauty. In saving her he has lost himself. The Devil, whom he has driven out of her, has entered into his own soul. The seeds of carnal love, which he has uprooted in her heart, have been sown in his own heart. The despiser of the flesh is conquered by the flesh. Sinner is changed into saint, and saint is changed into sinner. Paphnutius is tempted unceasingly in body and mind. No penance and no discipline avail. He vainly carries his temptations to a pillar and then to a desert tomb. He can no longer distinguish the voice of the Devil from the voice of God. He finally realizes that Satan has been guiding his steps and

¹⁸ This is the best of the stories which appeared under the title of *Balthazar*.

that he has been the sport of the demons of darkness. When at last he can bear it no longer and decides to rush to Thais, he reaches the convent to find her pass away as a saint. He throws himself on her, cursing and blaspheming, and is driven away by the nuns from the body, as if he were a ghoul. The monk pays with his own soul for the soul he has saved. His noble deed has encompassed his downfall. Venus, the mother of demons, has avenged herself on him for having taken away her chief priestess.

SAINT SATYR (1895)¹⁹

Fra Mino, in kneeling at the tomb of Saint Satyr in the chapel of his monastery, beholds in a vision, rising out of the tomb, many mists, each of which assuming the form of a woman. The ancient fairies and nymphs, having been driven from the earth by the monks, sought refuge in the tomb of their old friend. This satyr was received into the church and later admitted into the canon of the Saints, because he had helped the first apostles in their work of evangelization. Fra Minor betrays their secret, the tomb of the satyr is opened, the nymphs are chased out, and in revenge they filch the heart of the monk.

The story, *Saint Satyr*, might just as well have been named "Saint Satan." After the new-born Christianity had brought under its sway the Greeks and Romans of the West, the ancient deities swelled the legions of Hell, and the Greek satyrs became changed into devils with horns, tail and cloven foot. The nymphs, we learn in this story, became the medieval witches. It need not surprise us to find a satyr sanctified. According to popular superstition, there are devils among the sacred in Heaven. The soldiers, in Victor Hugo's, *Han d'Islande* (1823), swear by the merits of Saint Belphegor and Saint Beelzebub. "The devils," Victor Hugo tells us, "often pass themselves off as saints. Even the Church herself is not proof against such delusions. The demons Raguhel, Oribel and Tobiel were regarded as saints until the year 745 when Pope Zachary, having at length detected them, turned them out" (*les Travailleurs de la mer*, 1866).

¹⁹ This and the next three stories appeared in *The Well of St. Claire*, a collection of stories supposedly told to our author, during the Renaissance period, on the edge of Santa Clara's well at Siena by a priest, who held the unorthodox belief that the Devil was not so black as he was painted, and that he would reform in the end of days.

LUCIFER (1895)²⁰

In this story, Anatole France shows the danger of maligning the Devil. Spinello Spinelli, a talented artist of five centuries ago, who caricatured Lucifer, beholds in a vision the archangel who forsook Heaven to become prince of this world. He asks the painter in what place he beheld him under so brutish a form as he painted him. Satan bitterly resents the anxiety of the good Christians to present him in as ugly a form as they can command. There is really no warrant in the Sacred Scriptures for the conception of a deformed Devil. Satan is first presented as hideous in the apocryphal writings. In the *Acts of St. Bartholomew*, he who "one day wore a crown under the eyes of God," is described for the first time as black, horned, hairy, bat-winged and cloven footed.²¹ This form has been derived from the classical gods on whose heritage the Judeo-Christian Devil entered. Like the Greek Gorgon, the Christian Satan is meant to represent, as Anatole France has said, the sympathetic alliance between physical ugliness and moral evil.

The modern French writers have a rather flattering idea of the fiend's appearance. Georges Ohnet, in his novel, *L'olonté* (1889), describes his villain, Clément de Thauziat, as "resplendent in Satanic beauty" (p. 362).²² Anatole France himself represents the Devil as "black and beautiful as a young Egyptian" (*The Human Tragedy*). In popular imagination, however, this author admits that the Devil still continues to be repulsive in appearance. In his novel, *The Gods Are Athirst* (1912), he describes the little lawyer who played the part of the Devil for the entertainment of his fellow-prisoners as "small, dark, blind on one eye, hunch-backed, bandy-legged, the lame Devil in person" (p. 277).

THE HUMAN TRAGEDY (1895)

In *The Human Tragedy* as in *Thais*, our author aims to show how pride of spirit and lust of flesh will result from the rarest and saintliest virtues that Christian asceticism engenders in the heart of man.

²⁰ This story has been included, accompanied by a critical article, in the present writer's anthology of *Devil-Stories*. It is based on Giorgio Vasari's *Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori et Architetti* (1550). This book, which is the basis of the history of Renaissance art in Italy, was translated into English in 1900 by Mrs. J. Foster. Robert Arden has written, in 1910, *The Life of Giorgio Vasari, a Study of the Later Renaissance in Italy*.

²¹ Notions of the Devil as an Ethiopian or Moor are also found in the *Acts of the Martyrs* and in the writings of Augustine and Gregory the Great.

²² Marie Corelli, in her novel, *Sorrows of Satan* (1895), portrays her hero as "a perfect impersonation of perfect manhood."

Satan, watching the Franciscan brethren, who follow the teachings of the founder of their order and seek contentment in the forgetfulness of the world and of themselves, afflicts them by revealing to them truth and wisdom; "for there is no joy except in illusion and peace is found only in ignorance." Among these Mendicant Friars of the House of Viterbo is Fra Giovanni, who outdoes in humility all his brethren. He knows all the joys of simplicity and poverty, and being happy, is proof against the assaults of the Enemy. The Tempter appears to the eyes of this holy man first in the form of a veiled widow-woman to show to him how the tree of charity may bear ill fruits, but he is foiled by the monk's simplicity of mind. Fra Giovanni is less happy, however, when the Adversary, tempting him a second time in the guise of a holy bishop, holds reasonable discourse with him concerning his cherished poverty. But when the Devil sees how the poor monk's mind has been troubled by his words, he takes pity on him and, assuming his proper form, reassures him and tells him to be without fear. "Friend," says he, "be comforted. I am the Evil Spirit."

Fra Giovanni goes forth in the land to preach charity and poverty and human brotherhood. But he is rejected both by the oppressors and the oppressed. The government sees treason in his words, and he is cast into prison and condemned to death. He consoles himself for this treatment by the thought that he will die for the Truth. Then the Devil appears to him in a vision and asks him, "What is Truth?" Truth, the Devil answers his own question, is a sound, a chimera, an illusion. He then proceeds to show the humble monk by means of a symbol that all who have thought to possess truth have but possessed contradictory parcels of the Truth that is perfect and not to be attained or expressed by man. The poor prisoner's heart grows sad, and his faith is undermined by the ingenious arguments of the Subtle Doctor. How can he dare and care to be a martyr of a mere illusion? The Devil in this manner destroys in the monk the desire for martyrdom. He also tempts him with the joy of life and the lust of the flesh. The monk begins to sigh for freedom and the breath of day beneath the pine trees on the mountain slopes so enticingly presented by the Devil. Then the Deliverer leads the prisoner away with him, gives him to eat of the Apple and reveals to him the beauty and the sadness of life. Now Fra Giovanni thrills in response to the charm of the world, but his heart is troubled within him, and his body is distressed. He recognizes now his Tempter and Teacher, yet although he suffers from

his loss of faith, he feels no rancor against him. Knowing that the Devil has given him of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, has endowed him with reason and understanding, has brought him to feel and will and suffer, and has taught him to know life as it is, the man can only turn toward his Deliverer in gratitude and love.

"And Giovanni gazed at his companion, who stood there beautiful as day and night. And then he said to him:

"Through you it is I suffer, and I love you. I love you because you are my misery and my pride, my joy and my sorrow, the splendor and the cruelty of things created, because you are desire and speculation, and because you have made me like unto yourself. For verily your promise in the Garden, in the dawn of this world's days, was not in vain, and I have tasted the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, O Satan."

"Presently Giovanni resumed again:

"I know, I see, I feel, I will, I suffer. And I love you for all the ill you have done me. I love you, because you have undone me."

"And leaning on the Archangel's shoulder, the *man* wept bitterly."²³

THE LADY OF VERONA (1895)

This Italian woman so loves her beauteous body that she implores the Devil to save it after her death. The night after her burial her body disappears from the tomb. The story is a delicious bit of diabolical fancy.

PENGUIN ISLAND (1908)

Saint Mael, a Breton monk, famous for his missionary zeal, sets out to bring his backsliding children on the island of Hædic back to the faith. He wishes to make his missionary journey in a stone trough. But a nautical devil tempts him to fit out his apostolic boat with mast, sail, rudder and prow of wood for swifter progression.²⁴ The simple old saint lends his ear to the suggestion of the progressive Enemy of Mankind. In his eagerness to bring the stray sheep back to the fold, our holy man thus puts himself unwittingly in the power of the Adversary. A frightful tempest springs up, and driven out of its course, the accursed craft carries the monk by the power of Satan far away to the frozen Antarctic seas. At last the saint realizes that it is the Devil who is blowing into his sails, exorcizes him with the sign of the Cross, and worn out lands safely on an island which is inhabited not by men but by penguins. The

²³ The present writer's italics.

holy man, somewhat advanced in age and poor in sight and understanding, mistakes the penguins for a primitive heathen people, preaches the Gospel to them, and, after explaining to them successively Adoption, Rebirth, Regeneration and Illumination, baptizes them all in three days and three nights.

When the news of the baptism of the birds reaches Heaven, it causes great consternation. An ecclesiastical conference is called, and after long deliberations, it is decided to endow the birds with souls. The penguins are metamorphosed into human beings, and the island is transplanted to the coasts of Armorica. Saint Mael's first care is to clothe the inhabitants of the island, and in this good resolution he is warmly supported by the Devil, who is disguised as a monk. But the holy man is shocked at the unexpected results of this reform. The Devil remarks to the monk that modesty adds to woman's attraction for man and impairs rather than improves morals. The penguins commence to establish law and order on their island. They set bounds to their fields, and in dividing thus the ground among themselves they fight and murder each other. The holy man is deeply chagrined over the conduct of his spiritual offspring, but the Devil remarks that the murderers are but "creating law, founding property, establishing the principles of civilization, the basis of society and the foundations of the State." He explains further that the cause of property is force, and that might always makes for right in this best of all possible worlds. The rest of the history of Penguinia fully bears out the truth of the Devil's statement. The Catholic Devil has his hand in founding the first dynasty in Penguinia and in the canonization of its patron saint.²⁵

Penguin Island is Anatole France's principal political book, as *The Revolt of the Angels* is his principal theological book. It is a satirical history of his own country, and an unsparing condemnation of all human civilization.

²⁴ "Haste is from Satan, and leisure from the Merciful One," says an Arabic proverb.

²⁵ "It appears that Satan had taken a fancy to the Catholics, and sought their company a great deal—a circumstance which might give rise to the belief that the Devil is more Catholic than Protestant." (Victor Hugo in *les Travailleurs de la mer*.) The Devil in this book often borrows the appearance of a monk. He apparently loves to slip into priestly robes. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Devil is frequently shown under the garb of a monk. The Devil disguised as a monk has assumed a national character in Spain. On the Devil as a monk read the interesting essay by Georg Ellinger, "Ueber den Teufel als Mönch," in *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literatur-Geschichte*, N. F. I (1887-8), S. 174-81.

SATAN'S TONGUE-PIE (1908)²⁶

This legend is a delightful satire on woman's love of gossip.

THE GREAT SAINT NICOLAS (1909)²⁷

A devil, as big as a hazel nut, tempts the saint to taste from the salting-tub containing the flesh of the three little boys whom the inn-keeper murdered and pickled seven years ago. Six devils, in the form of flittermice, are said to be seen ready to seize a man's soul as it comes out of his mouth. After attributing to the Devil the wings of the bat, he is also given the full form of this animal.

THE REVOLT OF THE ANGELS (1914)

In this book, the reader is presented with the account of a second angelic rebellion against the Ruler of the heavens. It also contains a new version of the first war in the skies, which is more modern than that given by the Puritan Milton.²⁸ When the author was engaged in writing this book, he told an interviewer that he was going to put into it more ideas than Dante and Milton ever had, and he apparently made his boast good.

This *Revolt of the Angels* is in reality the expression of Anatole France's own bitter revolt against all traditional forms of thought. In this book the aged author concentrated his hatred of this ascetic, beauty-despising, death-desiring, mind-crippling, soul-enslaving medieval church. This is the most violent attack he has directed against the God of the Old Testament and the Talmud. Jehovah is presented as a harsh, cruel, dogmatic, despotic demiurge, opposed to all liberty, all curiosity, all doubt, standing in the way of every art, every science, and the sworn foe of all knowledge.²⁹ His Adversary, on the other hand, is described as a god of grace, a lover of learning, a friend of man and a hater of masters.

This second angelic rebellion occurs in our day. A number of the inhabitants of the heavens, who come down to earth to be the

²⁶ The story appeared in the collection, *The Merrie Tales of Jacques Tournebroke*.

²⁷ The story appeared in the volume, *The Seven Wives of Bluebeard*.

²⁸ The reader will recall Satan's indignation over the Miltonic version of the celestial war in the heavens. "The Englishman described me as being expelled from Heaven by cannon and gun-powder, and to this day every Briton believes that the whole of this silly story is in the Bible. What else he says, I do not know, for it is all in a long poem which neither I nor any one else ever succeeded in wading through." (Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, 1905.)

²⁹ "Jehovah is not god, but a mighty Demon, for he created the world." (*At the Sign of the Queen Pédauque*, 1893.)

guardian angels of men, employ their stay among us to gain an education which apparently is denied them in the upper regions. The principal angel in this book, Arcade, known in Heaven by the name Abdiel, is so eager to learn that he spends his days and nights in the libraries of Paris. He devours the works of the theologians, philosophers, physicists, geologists, and naturalists. He investigates the foundations of belief with the usual result that he loses his faith. He finds his new ideas in perpetual conflict with the teachings of the creed he has professed. According to his present belief, the God of the Jews and Christians, whom he calls Ialdabaoth, has not created the heavens and the earth, but a very small portion of the universe, which he holds in abject slavery and into which he has brought misery and suffering, decay and death.

The apostate angel is filled with a holy zeal to impart the truth he has obtained to his brethren, and he starts an intellectual movement among the angels who inhabit this earth. These enlightened spirits burn with the desire to bring freedom to the inhabitants of Heaven and of earth. They form a new conspiracy to overthrow the Lord and to set up Satan in his stead. The archangel failed in his attack upon Heaven, say the conspirators, as a result of the thunderbolts launched against him; but with the secret of the ruler of the heavens laid open by the American Franklin, this disparity between the combatants need no longer exist. After having organized their forces and equipped them with the most modern instruments of war, the leaders of the revolt seek out Satan by the waters of the Ganges and offer him the leadership. But he who first raised the flag of rebellion in Heaven refuses to lead another attack against the celestial citadel. He has had a dream, a vision, in which he conquers Heaven, overthrows God and has himself crowned as god only to find that nothing is accomplished after all. Victory has only inverted their roles. With his accession to power he grew as intolerant as he whom he had overthrown, whereas his enemy, shorn of power, became tolerant. Satan has buried his ambitions, preferring the lowly scene of his present labors to Heaven, and the greater victory over ignorance and intolerance to any conquest of the skies. No, Satan will not start another war, and he tells the angelic delegation:

"War engenders war, and victory, defeat. God, conquered, will become Satan; Satan, conquering, will become God. May the fates spare me this terrible lot. I love the Hell which formed my genius. I love the earth where I have done some good, if it be possible to

do any good in this fearful world where beings live but by rapine. . . . But what matter that men should be no longer submissive to Ialdabaoth if the spirit of Ialdabaoth is still in them; if they, like him, are jealous, violent, quarrelsome, and greedy, and the foes of the arts and of beauty? What matter that they have rejected the ferocious demiurge if they do not hearken to the friendly demons who teach all truths, to Dionysus, Apollo and the Muses?³⁰ As to ourselves, celestial spirits, sublime demons, we have destroyed Ialdabaoth, our Tyrant, if in ourselves we have destroyed Ignorance and Fear."

³⁰ The Muses were believed to be daughters of Satan. Carlyle's friend wished that the "Devil would fly away with the fine arts."