

The Restoration of Hell

by Leo Tolstoy

1

This happened when Jesus was revealing his teaching to men.

His teaching was so clear, so easy to follow, and so evidently saved men from evil that it seemed impossible that it should not be accepted or that anything could prevent its spreading.

Beelzebub, the father and ruler of all the devils, was alarmed. He clearly saw that his power over men would be forever ended unless Jesus renounced his teaching. He was alarmed but did not despair, and he incited the Scribes and Pharisees, his obedient servants, to insult and torment Jesus to the utmost of their power and to advise Christ's disciples to flee and abandon him. He hoped that condemnation to a shameful execution, reviling, abandonment by all his disciples, and finally the suffering and execution itself would cause Christ at the last moment to renounce his teaching, and that such a renunciation would destroy all its power.

The matter was decided on the cross. When Christ exclaimed, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Beelzebub exulted. He seized the fetters prepared for Jesus, tried them on his own legs, and proceeded to adjust them so that they could not be undone when affixed to Jesus.

But suddenly the words were heard from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And after that Christ cried, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost.

Beelzebub understood that all was lost. He wished to free his legs from the fetters and escape, but could not move from the spot. The fetters had become welded on him and bound his own limbs. He tried to use his wings, but could not unfold them. And Beelzebub saw how Christ appeared at the gates of Hell in a halo of light, and how the sinners, from Adam to Judas, came out, how all the devils fled, and how the very walls of Hell silently collapsed on all four sides. He could endure this no longer and with a piercing shriek fell through the rent floor to the nether regions.

2

One hundred, two hundred, three hundred years passed.

Beelzebub did not count the time. Around him was black darkness and dead silence. He lay motionless and tried not to think of what had happened, yet he still thought, and impotently hated him who had caused his downfall.

But suddenly – he did not remember or know how many hundred years had elapsed – he heard above him sounds resembling the trampling of feet, groans, cries, and gnashing of teeth.

Beelzebub lifted his head and began to listen.

That Hell could be re-established after Christ's victory was more than he could believe; yet the trampling, the groans, the cries, and the gnashing of teeth sounded clearer and clearer.

He raised his body and doubled up his shaggy legs with their overgrown hoofs. To his astonishment, the fetters fell off of themselves. Freely flapping his extended wings, he gave the whistle by which he had summoned his servants and assistants around him in former times.

Before he had time to draw breath, an opening yawned above his head, red flames glared, and a crowd of devils, hustling one another, dropped through the opening into that nether region and settled around Beelzebub like birds of prey around carrion. There were large devils and small devils, fat devils and thin devils, devils with long tails and devils with short tails, devils with pointed horns, devils with straight horns, and devils with crooked horns.

A shiny black one, naked except for a cape thrown over his shoulders, with a round hairless face and an enormous hanging paunch, sat on his heels before Beelzebub's very face, and rolling his eyes now up and now down, continued to smile, waving his long thin tail rhythmically from side to side.

3

"What does that noise mean?" said Beelzebub, pointing upwards. "What is going on up there?"

"Just what there always used to be," replied the shiny devil in the cape.

"Are there really some sinners?" asked Beelzebub.

"Many," replied the shiny one.

"But how about the teaching of him whom I do not wish to name?" asked Beelzebub.

The devil in the cape gave a grin that showed his sharp teeth, while suppressed laughter was heard among all the other devils.

"That teaching doesn't hinder us at all. Men don't believe in it," said the devil in the cape.

"But it plainly saved them from us, and he sealed it by his death!" said Beelzebub.

"I have altered all that," said the devil in the cape, rapidly tapping the floor with his tail.

"How have you altered it?"

"I have arranged it so that men do not believe in his teaching but in mine, which they call by his name."

"How did you do that?" asked Beelzebub.

"It came about of itself. I only helped a bit."

"Tell me of it briefly," said Beelzebub.

The devil in the cape lowered his head and was silent awhile as if leisurely considering. Then he began his story:

"When that dreadful thing happened, when Hell was overthrown and our father and ruler left us," said he, "I went to the places where that teaching which so nearly ruined us had been preached. I wanted to see how the people lived who fulfilled it, and I saw that those who lived according to that teaching were quite happy and quite beyond our reach. They did not grow angry with one another, did not give way to women's charms, and either did not marry or, if they married, kept to one wife. They did not own property but held everything in common. They did not defend themselves from any attacks, but returned good for evil. Their life was so good that others were more and more attracted to them. When I saw this I thought that all was lost, and meant to quit. But then something happened, which though insignificant in itself seemed to me to deserve attention, and I remained. Among these people some considered it necessary that they should all be circumcised and that none should eat meat that had been offered to idols, whereas others considered that all this was inessential and that they need not be circumcised and might eat anything. So I began to suggest to both sets of people that this disagreement was very important and that, as the matter concerned the service of God, neither the one side nor the other should give way. And they believed me, and their disputes became fiercer. On both sides they

began to be angry, and then I began to instill into each of them that they might prove the truth of their teaching by miracles. Evident as it is that miracles cannot prove the truth of a teaching, they were so anxious to be in the right that they believed me, and I arranged miracles for them. It was not difficult to do this. They believed anything that confirmed their desire to prove that they alone were in the right.

“Some said that tongues of fire had descended upon them; others declared that they had seen the risen body of their dead teacher himself, and much else. They kept inventing things that had never happened, and in the name of him who called us liars, lied no less well than we do. The one set said of the other, ‘Your miracles are not genuine, ours are the only genuine ones.’ And the others replied, ‘No, yours are not genuine, but ours are.’

“Matters were going well, but I was afraid that they might discern the too-evident deception, so I invented ‘The Church.’ And when once they believed in ‘The Church,’ I was at peace. I understood that we were saved, and that Hell was restored.”

4

“What is ‘The Church?’” asked Beelzebub severely, reluctant to believe that his servants were cleverer than he.

“Well, when people tell lies and feel that they won’t be believed, they always call God to witness and say, ‘By God, what I say is true!’ That, in substance, is ‘The Church,’ but with this peculiarity: that those who recognize themselves as being ‘The Church’ become convinced that they cannot err, and so whatever nonsense they may utter they can never recant it. ‘The Church’ is constituted in this way: men assure themselves and others that their teacher, God, to ensure that the law he revealed to men should not be misinterpreted, has given power to certain men, who, with those to whom they transfer this power, can alone correctly interpret his teaching. So these men, who call themselves ‘The Church,’ regard themselves as holding the truth, not because what they preach is true, but because they consider themselves the only true successors of the disciples of the disciples of the disciples – and finally of the disciples of the teacher, God himself. Though this method, like that of the miracles, has the drawback that people may simultaneously assert, each of himself, that they are members of the only true church (as has indeed always happened), it has the advantage that as soon as men have declared that they are ‘The Church’ and have built up their teaching on that assertion, they can no longer renounce what they have once said, however absurd it may be, and no matter what other people may say.”

“But why did ‘The Church’ misinterpret the teaching in our favor?” said Beelzebub.

“They did that,” continued the devil in the cape, “because having pronounced themselves to be the only expositors of God’s law and having persuaded others of this, they became the highest arbiters of men’s fate and therefore obtained the highest power. And having obtained that power, they naturally became proud, and for the most part depraved, and in that way excited the indignation and enmity of others against themselves. And for the struggle against their enemies, having no means but violence, they began to persecute, to execute, and to burn all who would not recognize their authority. Thus their very position obliged them to misinterpret the teaching so as to justify both their bad lives and the cruelties they employed against their enemies. And that is precisely what they did.”

“But the teaching was so simple and clear,” said Beelzebub, still reluctant to believe that his servants had done what it had not occurred to him to do, “that it was impossible to misinterpret it. ‘Do to others as you would want them to do to you!’ How can that be misinterpreted?”

“Well, by my advice they used various methods,” replied the devil in the cape. “Men have a story about a good magician who, to save a man from a wicked wizard, turned him into a small grain of wheat. The wicked wizard, having changed himself into a cock, was about to peck this little grain, but the good magician emptied a sack of grain over it. The wicked wizard could not eat up all the grain, and was also unable to find the one grain he wanted. That is what, by my advice, they did with the teaching of him who taught that all the law consists in doing to others what we wish them to do to us. They accepted sixty-six different books as being the sacred exposition of the law of God, and declared that every word in those books was the production of God the Holy Ghost. Over the simple and easily understood truth they poured such a heap of pseudo-sacred truths that it became impossible either to accept them all or to find among them the one truth which is alone necessary for man.

“That was their first method. The second, which they used with success for more than a thousand years, consisted in simply killing and burning anyone who wished to reveal the truth. That method is now going out of use, but they do not altogether abandon it. Though they do not burn those who try to disclose the truth, they so calumniate them and so poison their lives that only a few people venture to expose them.

“That is the second method. The third is that, asserting themselves to be ‘The Church,’ and therefore infallible, they simply teach – when it suits them – the contrary of what is said in the Scriptures, leaving it to their pupils to extract themselves from these contradictions as they please and as they can. So, for instance, it is said in the Scriptures, ‘Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither call yourselves masters, for you have one master: Christ.’ But they say, ‘We alone are the fathers, and we alone are the masters of men.’ Or again, it is said, ‘When you pray, do so in secret, and God will hear you,’ but they teach that men must pray in churches, in company, with singing and music. Further, it is said in the Scriptures, ‘Swear not at all,’ but they teach that it is necessary to swear implicit obedience to the authorities, whatever they may demand. Or it is said, ‘You shall not kill,’ but they teach that we should and must kill, according to law. Or again it is said, ‘My teaching is spirit and life; feed upon it as upon bread,’ whereas they teach that if bits of bread are dipped in wine and certain words are uttered over them¹, these bits of bread become flesh, the wine becomes blood, and that to eat this bread and drink this wine is very profitable for the salvation of the soul. Men believe this and diligently eat these sops, and afterwards, when they fall into our hands, they are astonished that the sops have not helped them.” And the devil in the cape, rolling his eyes and turning up his eyeballs, grinned from ear to ear.

“That is excellent,” said Beelzebub, and smiled. And the devils all broke out into loud laughter.

¹ Translator’s note – In the communion service of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the altar bread is cut up into small pieces, placed in the chalice with the wine, and administered with a spoon.

“Is it possible that things are just as they were before? Are there fornicators, robbers, and murderers?” asked Beelzebub, already quite cheerful.

The devils, cheerful too, now all spoke at once, trying to show off before Beelzebub.

“Not just as they were before, but better than ever!” cried one of them.

“We can’t cram all the adulterers into the old sections,” piped another.

“The robbers now are worse than they used to be,” cried a third.

“There is no getting fuel enough ready for the murderers!” roared a fourth.

“Don’t all speak at once,” said Beelzebub, “but let the one answer whom I will question. Who manages adultery? Step out and tell me how you now deal with the pupils of him who forbade men to change their wives, and said that a man should not look at a woman lustfully. Who manages adultery?”

“I do,” replied a womanish, brown devil, with a flabby face and a restless slobbering mouth, and he crawled up to Beelzebub on his haunches. He crept out in front of the others, crouched down on his heels, bent his head on one side, and, wagging his tufted tail, twisted it in between his legs and began thus in a sing-song voice:

“We do it both in the old way – already employed by you, our father and ruler, in the Garden of Eden, which gave the whole human race over into our power – and also in a new, ecclesiastical way. In the new ecclesiastical way, we persuade people that real marriage consists not in what it actually does consist in – the union of man and woman – but in dressing up in their very best clothes, going into a big building arranged for the purpose, placing on their heads hats specially made for the occasion, and walking three times round a little table to the sound of various songs.² We make people believe that only this is real marriage. And believing this, people naturally consider that every union of man and woman apart from these conditions is a simple pleasure binding them to nothing, or that it is the satisfaction of an hygienic necessity, and therefore they give themselves up unrestrainedly to that pleasure.”

The womanish devil bent his flabby head to the other side and was silent, as if awaiting the effect of his words on Beelzebub. Beelzebub nodded his head in token of approval, and the womanish devil continued:

“By this method, at the same time not neglecting the former method practiced in Eden, of curiosity and forbidden fruit,” he said, evidently wishing to flatter Beelzebub, “we obtain the very best results. Imagining that they can arrange for themselves an honest ‘Church’ marriage even after their union with many women, men change hundreds of wives and become so accustomed to profligacy that they go on doing the same even after their ‘Church’ marriage. And if for some reason any of the demands connected with their ‘Church’ marriage appear to them irksome, they arrange for the performance of another walk around the little table and the first is considered nullified.”

The womanish devil ceased, and having wiped his dribbling mouth with the tip of his tail, he bent his head to the other side and silently fixed his eyes on Beelzebub.

² Translator’s note – This description relates to the wedding service of the Russo-Greek Church, in which placing crowns on the heads of the bride and bridegroom and walking three times round the altar plays a prominent part.

“Simple and good,” said Beelzebub. “I quite approve. And who looks after the robbers?”

“I do,” replied a voice, and a big devil with large crooked horns, an upturned moustache, and enormous crooked paws, stepped forward. This devil, having crawled to the front like the previous one, arranged his moustache in military fashion with both paws and waited to be questioned.

“He who destroyed Hell,” said Beelzebub, “taught men to live like the birds of heaven, and bade men give to those who ask and yield their coats to those who would take their cloaks, saying that, to be saved, men should have no possessions. How then do you induce men who have heard that to go on robbing?”

“We do it,” said the devil with the moustache, throwing back his head majestically, “just as our father and ruler did when Saul was chosen king. Just as was done then, we instill into men the idea that, instead of ceasing to rob one another, it is more convenient to allow one man to rob them all, letting him rule over them. The only new thing in our present method is that, to confirm a particular man’s right to plunder, we lead him into a church, put a special cap on his head, seat him in a high armchair, put a little stick and a ball in his hand, smear him with vegetable oil, and in the name of God and the son of God proclaim this man who has been smeared with oil to be sacred. Thus the plundering carried on by this person can in no way be restricted, for he is considered sacred. So these sacred persons and their assistants, and the assistants of their assistants, all plunder the people unceasingly, calmly, and safely. At the same time, laws and regulations are generally instituted which enable an idle minority – even without being anointed – to plunder the working majority with impunity. Indeed, in some countries now the plundering goes on without any anointed person at all, just as much as where they exist. As our father and ruler sees, the method we use is practically the old one. What is new is only that we have made this method more general, more secret, more widespread in extent and time, and more stable.

“We have made the method more general in that, formerly, people voluntarily submitted to whomever they elected, whereas now we have arranged so that, quite apart from their wishes, they submit, not to someone they have chosen, but to anyone who turns up.

“We have made the method more secret in that now those who are robbed – thanks to the arrangement of taxation, and especially of indirect taxes – do not see those who rob them.

“And the method is more widespread in extent because, not content with plundering their own people, the so-called Christian nations, under various very strange excuses, and especially on the pretext of diffusing the Christian religion, also rob all other nations who have anything worth stealing.

“In regard to time, this new method is more extended than the old one, thanks to the institution of public and governmental loans. They now rob, not only the present generation, but future ones as well.

“And we have made this method more stable by causing the chief plunderers to be regarded as sacred persons, so that people are afraid to resist them. It is sufficient for the chief plunderer to have had time to get himself smeared with oil, and then he may quietly go on plundering whom he pleases and as much as he wishes. At one time in Russia, as an experiment, I placed on the throne one after another the most disreputable women – stupid, illiterate, and dissolute – who

by their own laws had no right to be there. The last of them³ was not only wanton, but also a criminal who murdered her husband and also her legal heir. And just because she had been smeared with oil, people did not slit her nostrils or flog her with a whip, as they were wont to do with those who killed their husbands, but slavishly submitted to her for thirty years, letting her and her innumerable lovers plunder their property and even deprive them of their personal liberty. The result now is that open robberies – the taking by force of a purse, a house, or clothes – are hardly one-millionth of all the ‘legal’ robberies that are continually being committed by those in power. In our time, unpunished and hidden robberies, and in general a readiness to steal, are so established among men that the chief purpose of life for almost everybody is plunder, moderated only by mutual strife among the robbers!”

8

“Well, that is good,” said Beelzebub. “But the murderers? Who looks after them?”

“I do,” said a blood-red devil, stepping forward from the crowd. He had sharp horns, fangs protruding from his mouth, and a thick tail, which he carried stiffly erect.

“How do you get men to be murderers when they are followers of him who said, ‘Do not render evil for evil, but love your enemies’? How do you make murderers of such men?”

“We do it in the old way,” replied the red devil in a deafening, ear-splitting voice, “by arousing avarice, discord, hatred, vengeance, and pride. In the same old way we persuade the teachers of men that the best way to teach men not to murder is for the teachers themselves publicly to murder those who have committed murder. This method does not so much furnish us with murderers as prepare murderers for us. But a greater number have been and still are given us by the new teaching of the infallibility of ‘The Church,’ of ‘Church’ marriage, and of Christian equality.

“The teaching of the infallibility of ‘The Church’ used to give us the greatest number of murderers. Those who recognized themselves as members of the infallible ‘Church’ considered it a crime to allow false interpreters of the teaching to pervert people, and therefore considered that to kill such people was an action pleasing to God. They killed whole populations, and executed and burned hundreds of thousands of people. It is droll to notice that those who were beginning to understand the true teaching – our most dangerous enemies – were regarded as our own servants, while those who executed and burned them at the stake, and who were actually our obedient servants, regarded themselves as saints fulfilling the will of God.

“So it was formerly, but now a very large number of murderers are given us by the teaching of ‘Church’ marriage and by that of equality. The teaching of marriage gives us, in the first place, the murder of husbands and wives by one another, and in the second place, the murder of children by their mothers. Husbands and wives kill each other when certain demands of the law and custom of ecclesiastical marriage seem to them hampering, but mothers kill their children chiefly when the unions from which the children spring are not recognized as marriages. Such murders are of constant occurrence.

“Again, though the murders occasioned by the ‘Church’ teaching of equality only occur periodically, when they do occur they do so in great numbers. According to that teaching, people are led to believe that they are all equals before the law. But the plundered people feel that this is untrue. They see that this equality before the law only amounts to making it

³ Transcriber’s note – Catherine the Great.

convenient for the robbers to continue to rob while making it inconvenient for them to do the same, and they become indignant and attack their plunderers. And then mutual murder begins, which sometimes gives us tens of thousands of murderers at a time.”

9

“But murders in war? How do you entice to war the pupils of him who recognized men as the sons of one Father and bade them to love their enemies?”

The red devil grinned, emitted a jet of fire and smoke from his mouth, and joyously slapped himself on the back with his thick tail.

“We persuade each nation that it is the very best in the world – ‘*Deutschland über alles*,’ France, England, Russia ‘*über alles*’ – and that this nation (their name is legion) ought to dominate all the others. As we instill the same idea into all the nations, they (always feeling themselves in danger from their neighbors) are always preparing to defend themselves and becoming exasperated with one another. But the more one side prepares for defense and on that account gets angry with its neighbor, the more all the others prepare for defense and hate one another. Now, as a result, those who accepted the teaching of him who called us murderers are chiefly and continually engaged on preparations for murder and on actually murdering.”

10

“All this is very clever,” said Beelzebub after a long pause. “But how is it that learned men, free from the deception of the ‘Church’ teaching, have not seen that ‘The Church’ has perverted the teaching, and have not reinstated it?”

“They cannot possibly do that,” said a dusky black devil with a flat receding forehead, protruding ears, and feeble limbs, speaking in a self-assured voice as he crawled out in front of the others, wrapped in a mantle.

“Why not?” asked Beelzebub sternly, annoyed by the self-assured tone of the devil in the mantle.

Unabashed by Beelzebub’s exclamation, the devil in the mantle leisurely sat down, not squatting like the others but crossing his weak legs in eastern fashion, and began to speak without hesitation in a measured voice.

“They cannot do that because I constantly distract their attention from what it is possible and necessary for them to know, and direct it to what it is unnecessary for them to know and what they never will know.”

“How do you do that?”

“I have done it in the past and am still doing it in various ways according to the period,” replied the devil in the mantle. “Of old I used to teach men that it was most important for them to know particulars about the relations between the persons of the Trinity, about the origin of Jesus Christ and his nature, about the attributes of God, and so forth. They discussed and argued much and lengthily and quarreled and grew angry. And these discussions so absorbed them that they did not think about how they ought to live, and consequently had no need to know what their teacher had said about life.

“Afterwards, when they had become so confused by these discussions that they themselves no longer understood what they were talking about, I persuaded some of them that the most

important thing in life was to study and explain everything written by a man called Aristotle, who lived more than a thousand years before in Greece. Others I persuaded that the most important thing was to find a stone by means of which they could make gold, and an elixir that could heal all diseases and make men immortal. And to these things the cleverest and most learned of them directed all their mental powers.

“Those who were not interested in this, I persuaded that it is most important to know whether it is the earth that moves round the sun or the sun round the earth. And when they had found out that the earth revolves and not the sun, and had ascertained how many million miles it is from the sun to the earth, they were very glad, and since then till now they investigate the distances between the stars still more ardently, though they know that there can be no end to the number of such distances – the number of stars being itself infinite – and that it is quite unnecessary for them to know it. Besides this, I also persuaded them that it is very necessary to know how all the animals came into existence, and all the worms, and all the plants, and all the infinitesimal creatures. And though this knowledge was also quite unnecessary for them, and quite evidently impossible of attainment – seeing that the number of creatures is as infinite as that of the stars – yet they directed and still direct all their mental powers to these and similar investigations of material phenomena, and are greatly astonished that the more they find out concerning unnecessary things, the more remains unknown. Though it is evident that in proportion as their investigations proceed, the domain of what remains uninvestigated becomes wider and wider and the subjects of investigation become more and more complex and the knowledge they acquire becomes less and less applicable to life, this does not at all perplex them. Fully persuaded of the importance of their occupations, they continue to investigate, to preach, to write, to print, and to translate from one language to another all their investigations and discussions, which for the most part are futile. Or, if they are occasionally applicable, they only do so for the pleasure of the rich minority or to aggravate the position of the majority of the poor.

“To hinder these men from ever again guessing that the one thing necessary for them is the establishment of the law of life indicated in the teaching of Jesus, I impress on them that they cannot know the laws of the spiritual life. I convince them that all religious teaching, including the teaching of Jesus, is an error and a superstition, and that they can ascertain how they ought to live from the science I have devised for them called sociology, which consists in studying how former people lived badly. So, instead of trying to live better themselves according to the teaching of Jesus, they think they need only study the lives of former people, and that from that they will be able to deduce general laws of life, and that to live well they need only conform their life to the laws they thus devise.

“In order to confirm them in error still more, I suggest to them something resembling the teaching of ‘The Church,’ namely, that there exists a certain succession of knowledge which is called ‘Science,’ and that the assertions of this ‘Science’ are as infallible as the assertions of ‘The Church.’ As soon as those who are considered the promoters of ‘Science’ become persuaded of their infallibility, they naturally proclaim as indubitable truth things that are not only unnecessary but often absurd, and, having proclaimed them, they cannot repudiate them.

“That is why I say that, as long as I continue to instill into these men respect and veneration for the science I have devised for them, they will never comprehend that teaching which all but destroyed us.”

“Very good! Thank you,” said Beelzebub, and his face shone. “You have deserved a reward and I will duly recompense you.”

“But us! You have forgotten us!” exclaimed the rest of the various devils – small, large, bandy-legged, fat, and thin.

“What do you do?” asked Beelzebub.

“I am the devil of technical improvements.”

“I of the division of labor.”

“I of the means of transportation.”

“I of book printing.”

“I of art.”

“I of medicine.”

“I of culture.”

“I of education.”

“I of reforming people.”

“I of intoxication.”

“I of philanthropy.”

“I of socialism.”

“I of women’s rights”, they shrieked in chorus, crowding forward in front of Beelzebub.

“Speak one at a time and briefly!” commanded Beelzebub. “You!” and he turned to the devil of technical improvements, “What do you do?”

“I persuade people that the more things they produce and the faster they produce them, the better it will be for them. And men, destroying their lives in order to produce things, make more and more, though they are not needed by those who compel them to be made and are inaccessible to those who do make them.”

“Splendid! Well, and you!” said Beelzebub to the devil of the division of labor.

“I persuade men that as articles can be produced quicker by machines than by men, it is necessary to turn men into machines. They do this, and the men who are turned into machines hate those who have done this to them.”

“Excellent! And you?” said Beelzebub, addressing the devil of the means of transportation.

“I persuade men that, for their welfare, they ought to move from place to place as speedily as possible. And so, instead of each improving his way of life where he is, men spend a large part of their time in moving from place to place. They are very proud that they can go more than thirty-five miles⁴ in an hour.”

Beelzebub praised this one also.

The devil of book printing then stepped forward. His business, as he explained, consisted in communicating to as many people as possible all the nasty and stupid things that are done and written in the world.

The devil of art explained that, under the pretext of comforting men and arousing elevated feelings in them, he pandered to their vices by depicting them in attractive aspects.

The devil of medicine explained that his business was to persuade men that their most important business was the care of their body. And since anxiety about the body has no end,

⁴ Translator’s note – When this was written, thirty-five miles an hour was about the speed of a Russian express train, which was their fastest means of transportation.

men occupying themselves with its care and aided by medicine not only forget about the lives of other people, but also about their own true life.

The devil of culture explained that he taught people that to make use of all the things superintended by the devils of technical improvement, division of labor, means of transportation, book printing, art, and medicine is something like a virtue, and that a man who profits by all this may feel quite satisfied with himself and need not try to improve.

The devil of education explained that he persuaded men that, while living badly and not even knowing in what a right life consists, they could teach children the right way of living.

The devil of reforming explained that he taught people that, though they themselves were bad, they could reform bad people.

The devil of intoxication explained that he taught men that, instead of trying to live better in order to escape from the sufferings produced by bad living, it was better to forget themselves under the influence of intoxication by wine, opium, tobacco, or morphine.

The devil of philanthropy said that he rendered men inaccessible to goodness by persuading them that, by plundering by the ton and giving back to those they plundered by the ounce, they were charitable and had no need of improvement.

The devil of socialism boasted that he excited class enmity in the name of the highest organization of human life.

The devil of women's rights boasted that, besides class enmity, he aroused enmity between the sexes in the name of a still more perfect arrangement of life.

"I am comfort! I am fashion!" squealed and cried yet other devils, crawling up to Beelzebub.

"Do you really imagine that I am so old and stupid as not to understand that as soon as the teaching of life itself is corrupted, everything that might be harmful to us becomes profitable?" cried Beelzebub with a loud peal of laughter. "Enough! I thank you all!" And lifting his wings, he sprang to his feet.

The devils encircled Beelzebub. At one end as they linked up was the devil in the cape, the inventor of "The Church." At the other end was the devil in the mantle, the inventor of "Science." These two clutched each other's paws and the ring was complete.

Then, chuckling, shrieking, whistling, snorting, and waving and flicking their tails, they all spun and danced round Beelzebub. He himself danced in the middle, spreading and flapping his wings and kicking his legs up high.

From above could be heard cries, groans, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

1903

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