

## THE DEVIL.

BY COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

## I.

A LITTLE while ago I delivered a lecture on "Superstition," and in that lecture I took the ground that the Devil was the foundation of Christianity; that the Devil was really the keystone of the arch and that if you took him out the arch fell. I tried to show that demonology was a necessary part of orthodox Christianity, and that to give up the Devil was to throw away Christ.

Several ministers had the goodness to answer me; others had the goodness in short interviews to give their opinion, and some were honest enough and stupid enough to say that they believed in the existence of the Devil; and some were dishonest and "spiritual" enough to say that all allusions to the Devil in the Bible could be easily explained by saying that these devils were personifications of evils. Others were not quite sure whether there was a Devil or not, and proceeded to tell what others believed without saying what their convictions were. But one good man and a kind man said that he believed in the Devil, an actual, living, personal Devil, who was attending to business; and that all the evidence that he needed to convince him of the existence of this Devil was furnished by my life and my lectures. He undoubtedly was a good man; and when I read these sermons and these answers, in spite of myself there came into my mind a line from Heinrich Heine: "Christ rode upon an ass, but now asses ride on Christ."

Now, the questions are, first, where did the idea of the Devil come from? Second, does the Devil really exist? And third, do the sacred scriptures teach the existence of the Devil and of unclean spirits? And fourthly, whether this belief in devils is a necessary part of what is known as "orthodox Christianity?"

Now, where did the idea that a Devil exists come from? Where did man get it? How was it produced?

You must remember that fear is an artist; fear is a sculptor, a painter, and fear is a most wonderful dreamer. You must remember, too, that among all tribes, among all nations, some persons were the sport and prey of natural phenomena; some others were struck by lightning, the bosom blasted and the child left motherless; some were devoured by earthquakes; some were seized with the burnings and freezings of fever; some were overwhelmed by volcanoes, by rivers of fire, and our poor ancestors thought, and naturally thought, that all this was the work of some malicious intelligence, of some frightful fiend, of some enemy of the human race; and this was a natural result of the facts in nature upon the undeveloped savage brain. As I have said a thousand times, every brain is a field where nature with unconscious hand sows the seeds of thought, and the crop depends upon the soil.

Along the banks of the Ganges wandered Asuras, the most powerful of devils, and they warred against the Devas, the good gods; and they were not