

THE WEEKLY ONTARIO.

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W. H. MORTON, Business Manager. J. G. HERRICK, Editor-in-Chief.

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THE DEVIL

As the hot weather is now pretty well over, and fuel promises to be scarce, it might not be inappropriate or unprofitable to usher in the cool season with the discussion of a subject, or rather, an individual who can bid defiance to the coal-heavers' union but who has never before, to our knowledge, figured as the subject of a leading editorial.

Prior to the war a namesake of his used to be a necessary part of the equipment of every printing-office, big or little. But the majority of the "devils" of the printing fraternity have enlisted and gone to the war and not a few of the number are now sleeping an enduring sleep, undisturbed by the detonations of bursting shells and the shouts of former comrades. Their grimy, unromantic round of duties here at home is now discharged by prim, finicky girls, who keep everything in spotless order.

Among the manuscripts belonging to the estate of the late Mark Twain, recently auctioned off in New York was Mark's opinion of the Devil. It makes interesting reading, as a friendly plea for one who has few real friends:

"I have no special regard for Satan, but I can at least claim that I have no prejudices against him. It may even be that I have been a little in his favor, on account of his not having a fair show. All religions issue bibles against him, but we never hear his side. We have none but the evidence for the prosecution and yet we have rendered the verdict. To my mind this is irregular. It is un-English, it is un-American, it is French. Without this precedent Dreyfus could not have been condemned.

"Of course Satan has some kind of a case, it goes without saying. It may be a poor one, but that is nothing; that can be said about any of us. As soon as I can get the facts I will undertake his rehabilitation myself, if I can find an impolite publisher. It is a thing which we ought to be willing to do for anybody who is under a cloud.

"We may not pay him reverence, for that would be indiscreet, but we can at least respect his talents. A person who has for untold centuries maintained the imposing position of spiritual head of four-fifths of the human race, and political head of the whole of it, must be granted the possession of executive abilities of the loftiest order. In his large presence the popes and politicians shrink to midgets for the microscope. I would like to see him. I would rather see and shake him by the tail than any other member of the European Concert."

Modern theology has abolished both the Devil and his torrid place of abode. It is not very long since we heard a preacher in Belleville proclaiming his belief in the existence of a personal Devil. The preacher was a comparatively recent graduate of a Canadian university. But nevertheless the great balance of the testimony of the later theological and philosophical authorities declares that Satan is only a myth.

"There is no Devil but Fear" is the positive dictum of the philosophy of today. And it is very difficult to defend the ancient dogma upon any satisfactory logical grounds. But none the less the doctrine persists to an amazing degree and is accepted by the great majority of the members of the orthodox churches.

In this popular belief God, the supreme ruler of the universe, represents goodness, truth, justice, compassion, benevolence. Satan is the personal head of the powers of evil, falsehood, malevolence, treachery, destructiveness, cruelty.

Between the two powers, Good and Evil, there is supposed to be unending war. The powers are so evenly balanced that neither side can gain the mastery. Sometimes Good seems to be in the ascendant. Oftener, perhaps, Evil appears to be getting the better of the contest.

It requires only a glance to see how utterly absurd is such a proposition. There cannot be two supreme beings. Either God is supreme or He is not. If He is supreme then Satan can be defeated or destroyed at any time that God wills. If God is supreme then Satan can work

only by permission and because God allows him to do so.

The doctrine in its Scriptural form was undoubtedly borrowed by Israelites during their period of exile in Mesopotamia and was well developed in the Zoroastrian religion or philosophy that had its home in Persia. In Zoroastrianism Ormuzd, the author of all good, is opposed by Ahriman, the source of all evil, and the opposition is represented as running through the whole universe.

But the idea is much more ancient indeed than the philosophy of Zoroaster and is as old as the human race itself.

Primitive man, often the victim of temptation, famine or pestilence, attributed his misfortunes to evil spirits. He saw trees shattered or his companions struck down by the terrifying thunder-bolt and he trembled before a power that he could neither control nor understand.

During the Middle Ages the belief in the Devil was absorbing and universal. Saints believed themselves to be in constant conflict with him. Martin Luther was always conscious of the presence and opposition of Satan.

"As I found he was about to begin again," says Luther, "I gathered together my books and got into bed. Another time in the night I heard him above my cell walking on the cloister, but as I knew it was the Devil I paid no attention to him and went to sleep."

Such superstition makes us smile, but, it may be asked, how far has the bulk of humanity, in the year 1917, advanced beyond the medieval superstition? We still find many intelligent people attributing such disasters as the present war in Europe to the machinations of the Devil. We still find many of our clergymen professing to believe in a Hell of eternal torment presided over by the Prince of Darkness.

Of course the ministers really do not believe anything of the kind. If they did, they would not ignore so vitally important a subject as they practically do now, but would never cease to utter the most earnest and solemn kind of warnings to human beings that they might avoid a fate so terrible. That was the case with the ministers whom we used to hear in our boyhood days but now the so-called "hell-fire sermon" is never heard.

Neither does the pew-holder any longer really believe in the Devil and his thankless task of torturing in the most cruel fashion the luckless human spirits that go down to his plutonian abode. If the pew-holder did actually believe, he too would be out warning his neighbors and he would in many other ways conduct himself differently.

As we see it, the Devil is an altogether superfluous and unnecessary part of the Divine Plan.

Is it not easier and more reasonable to believe that there is but One Supreme Ruler? That he is all powerful, all-wise and absolutely JUST?

What we ignorant human beings look upon as good and evil are really an essential part of the Divine Plan.

Within certain bounds we are granted complete liberty of action. We can lie, cheat, steal, get drunk and misbehave ourselves generally or we can lead clean, decent, orderly lives. If we do wrong we are visited with inevitable punishment in the present life. If we do well we are rewarded in the present life.

The Power that rules is absolutely just. The so-called Evil is necessary for our discipline. What we call Good is necessary for our encouragement.

Examine the Plan from every view-point and the longer you examine it the more clearly you will realize how infinitely wise and benevolent is the Author. The longer you examine the Plan the more clearly you will realize that it requires no Devil for its perfect working out.

Mr. H. G. Wells, the English author, in his latest book, gives us a conception of a God, who is neither all-powerful nor all-wise. He is represented as a finite being, struggling against adverse conditions towards perfection. Mr. Wells' argument is more interesting than it is convincing. He does not go very far until he lands in difficulties more involved than those he seeks to avoid.

Nevertheless we must admit that we have had, like Mark Twain, a certain admiration for the Satan of popular theology. The consummate adroitness with which he fells the wisest of human beings shows ability of a high order. His unending perseverance, his unflagging zeal, his patient industry, his indomitable determination, his unflinching cheerfulness of spirit, his companionableness, his courtesy, his care to avoid giving offence, may all be evidence of good qualities devoted to a bad purpose but they are qualities without which success in any line is impossible.

The Devil is in a bad line of business but we must admit he is making a fine success of it.

We have witnessed the abolition and passing of the Devil of the preceding and earlier generations with a certain amount of regret. He was a most interesting character and his going creates a distinct loss to literature, to art and, perhaps, as a check to human impulsiveness. But the decrees of modern theology are inexorable. He has gone and we fear he must remain.

THE SHADOW AGAIN FALLS

The shadow of the casualty list falls darkly over Canada once again and death treads upon the threshold of other Belleville homes to bring a message of conquest in a far-off country. But as the Sombre Angel comes, a flash of golden light, the glory of a sacrifice for all mankind, breaks through the veil. They live, these sons of Belleville, who are struck down in the war against war. We have known them; we could not know them better; they could have done no more had they lived into centuries and the tale is told in wondrous whispers down the generations.

Five of the boys who formerly found employment in the various departments at The Ontario office prior to the war, heard and answered the great call that came to every true son of Canada but they will not now return.

Here are the five who are now numbered with Canada's heroic dead—"Pat" Yeomans, "Alf" Smith, Roy Shorts, Marson Hitchon and to these must now be added another name for Belleville's deathless scroll of honor—"Bud" Farrow.

What a straight, upstanding, pattern of youth and strength "Bud" Farrow was. The spirit that moved this valiant son of Belleville to give up his excellent position with the McLaughlin company was the same spirit that animated those who had gone forward and had fallen before, the spirit that impels those who still remain never to let go until the pride of the brutal Hun is humbled to the dust.

To these boys, in a sense peculiarly our own, we can pay no more fitting tribute than that contained in the words of Rupert Brooke, himself a martyr in the present war,—

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich/dead!  
 There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,

But dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.  
 These laid the world away; poured out the red  
 Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be  
 Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene

That men call age; and those who would  
 have been,  
 Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

VANDALISM AND EXTRAVAGANCE

Colonel Ponton in his excellent letter, a few days ago, regarding the destruction of Zwick's island inquired what the press of Belleville had to say regarding the vandalism that was there, day after day, being manifested.

Upon a score of different occasions The Ontario has protested in the most vigorous manner against the work of those who were destroying one of our principal beauty spots. Surely there is no possible ground for doubt, in reference to our attitude. We regard the whole proceeding as a municipal crime of the most flagrant description and we have not hesitated to say so from time to time in the plainest of language.

We have often wondered why it is that each succeeding council that we elect goes on and continues the bad work of its predecessors. We believe the people of the city are almost unanimous in the desire that the island should be saved, and yet one council after another keeps right along doing the very thing that the people who elected them do not want them to do. The present council is neither better nor worse, in that respect, than those that have gone before.

We fancy the trouble is not occasioned by pure cussedness on the part of the city fathers or even by indifference to the public wishes and interests so much as it is by indolence. It is a handy place from which to draw sand and gravel. The council exemplifies the principle of ease. They follow the line of least resistance.

Surely it is manifest to everybody by this time that the building of roadways with gravel from Zwick's island is a foolish and extravagant process. The gravel is soft and works up into mud and dust after only a few weeks of traffic upon it. Then why continue the extravagance, especially when the extravagance is working for us a permanent injury in another way?

The vandalism can apparently be stopped in only one way—elect only such aldermen as will pledge themselves to see that the vandalism is stopped. The people have the remedy in their own hands. Let them see that the remedy is applied.

Zwick's island was purchased by the city

during the mayoralty of Mr. R. J. Graham to be used as a site for a filtering basin for the city waterworks. The project was good but it has never been carried out. We agree that it would not be wise to undertake any such expenditure during the period of the war. But we can in the meantime quit destroying our birth-right.

There are other deposits of sand and gravel about the city quite as good and as conveniently located as the deposit on Zwick's island. What is the matter with using some of them? But is it not time that we got out of the eighth-concession method of street-building and devoted a little attention to permanence and economy?

WHY UNION DOES NOT ATTRACT

The country does not want Sir Robert Borden as premier of Canada, and it is quite probable that Sir Robert Borden does not desire to be premier any longer.

In many respects he has measured up to his task; in many other respects he has failed to strike at the critical moment. If anything, he has been "the easy boss," easy with Hughes, easy with Allison, easy with Rogers, easy with the Ross rifle—a man who was too much prejudiced to the belief that the party to which he was expected to give leadership could do no wrong. Even today there are grave questions on which the premier gives no sign of applying the required action. The public today wonders how much of the C.N.R. and how much of conscription is mixed into the present desire to achieve union government with Tory control. The Liberal party is suspicious of some of the men who have gone over. It does not question the motives of others. It has had no opportunity of getting at the inside of war contracts of the present day and war administration. Perhaps every man would stand back in horror if he knew what was being perpetrated, while the "Easy Boss" was letting the elect, the Perleys and the Flavells, go on with their business. How about the constant "scrapping" of Canadian equipment carried by the Canadian soldier to England and discarded there?

Liberalism should beware of the entanglements of the war cabinet that cleaves to the old crowd and the "Easy Boss."

In preventing the waste of bread lies the great possibility of aiding the Allies. It is flour and more flour they need.

ADDRESS TO THE DEVIL

O Thou! whatever title suit thee—  
 Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie—  
 Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie  
 Closes'd under hatches,  
 Spairges about the brimstone cootie  
 To scald poor wretches!

Hear me, Auld Hangie, for a wee,  
 An' let poor damned bodies be;  
 I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,  
 Ev'n to a dell,  
 To skelp an' scald poor dogs like me  
 An' hear us squeal.

Great is thy power an' great thy fame;  
 Far kend an' noted is thy name;  
 An' tho' yon lavin' heugh's thy hame,  
 Thou travels far;  
 An' faith (thou's neither lag, nor lame,  
 Nor blate, nor scaur.

Whyles, rangin' like a roarin' lion,  
 For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin';  
 Whyles, on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',  
 Tirlin the kirks;  
 Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',  
 Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my rev'rend graunie say,  
 In lanely glens ye like to stray;  
 Or, where auld ruin'd castles grey  
 Nod to the moon,  
 Ye fright the nightly wand'ers' way  
 Wi' eldritch croon.

But a' your doings to rehearse,  
 Your wily snares an' fechtin' fierce  
 Sin' that day Michael did you pierce  
 Down to this time,  
 Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,  
 In prose or rhyme.

An' now, Auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin'  
 A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',  
 Some luckless hour will send him linkin',  
 To your black Pit;  
 But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin'  
 An' cheat you yet.

But fare-you-weel, Auld Nickie-Ben!  
 O, wad ye tak a thought an' men!  
 Ye ablin's might—I dinna ken—  
 Still hae a stake:  
 I'm wae to think upo' yon den,  
 Ev'n for your sake!

—Robert Burns, News.

Other Editors' Opinions

STILL WORRYING ABOUT COB-OURG

Last week's Whitby Gazette says: "The Kaiser's Favorite Cobourg Regiment" caught one's eye in a war despatch the other day. With 'Berlin' changed to 'Kitchener,' and the 'House of Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha' to the 'House of Windsor,' probably our neighbor Cobourg, which has sent so many men overseas to fight for the Empire, will fall in line and wish to change its name to something less German."

The Gazette editor need not worry about Cobourg. Just now there are about 600 Cobourg men over in France trying to change Kaiser Bill's name to "Mud." When they finish that job they will consider changing the name of this town—Cobourg Sentinel-Star.

PARALYSIS BY PARTY HABIT

Amid the sorry aftermath of last week's Western Liberal Convention, it may be possible to glean one small grain of hope. The whole affair affords so astounding evidence of paralysis by partisan habit that, like Billy Sunday's "booze sermon," it may frighten some of us (of either party stripe) into breaking our own chains.

The first gasp of astonishment of the average Manitoba Liberal seems to have been pretty well voiced by that forthright old-timer, Alexander Macdonald, when he ejaculated: "Damnable and despicable." Since which, as much in sorrow as in anger, elevators generally are lamenting the lost opportunity of certain of the province's "favorite sons."

Their taking a strong minority stand for the convictions with which in the past they had been credited, would have created a rallying centre for a large body of earnest but as yet unorganized, win-the-war opinion. But so long had "part harmony" been a chief concern in workaday politics that even well-meaning men eagerly grasped at the convention's ludicrous shadow of it—and in so doing let go their hold on all that really matters in a national crisis. Canadian Finance does not doubt that the primary purpose of Manitoba's Liberal leaders in calling the convention was patriotic, not partisan. The trouble was they failed to realize that for national ends party methods must now be abandoned. To say that Norris, Hudson, Johnson and others were out-manoeuvred in the convention by Alberta's Sifton-Cross-Oliver combination may afford an explanation. It furnishes no excuse. The blunt fact is that no one of them proved strong enough to nail his colors to the mast. While there are those who seek to glory in their shame, there are more (and of both parties) who hope to see them redeem, so far as may be, his recent act of weakness. Not by self-excusing or blaming of others, but by works meet unto repentance.

Mr. Hudson is reported as saying that he believes the door to be not yet shut against the forming of a national government before an election. Unhappily, it is now considerably less widely ajar than before the convention. But Manitoba still hopes that Mr. Hudson and some of his colleagues are patriotically big enough to own up to their recent surrender to party littleness, and work whole-heartedly in whatever part may still be left to them in a concerted effort for a national win-the-war policy and administration.

The certainty that win-the-war meetings and conventions will be held in considerable numbers at many points throughout the West in the immediate future leads the Manitoba Free Press to make the very timely suggestion that at all such meetings authority to act thereafter in the name of the electors present should be delegated to representatives. As it points out, the appointment of fifteen or twenty delegates at each large meeting would create a committee empowered to co-operate in any extensive movement.—Canadian Finance (Winnipeg.)

UNEVIABLE NOTORIETY

Fifty mills on the dollar is a pretty stiff tax rate, even for a town. In the country it must almost provoke the farmers to open rebellion. Yet that is what Gravenhurst property owners will be asked to pay this year. It is well perhaps to be distinguished for something, and we have no doubt Gravenhurst will have the distinction of being the most highly taxed town in Ontario.—Campbellford News.