

# **THE DEVIL**

**BY**  
**LEO TOLSTOY**

*Translated by*  
**AYLMER MAUDE**

But I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and call it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell.

MATTHEW V. 28, 29, 30.

## LIST OF RUSSIAN NAMES

*With stress-accents marked to show which syllable should be emphasized.*

Dómna, a cook in Tolstoy's house.  
Leo Tolstóy, the author.  
Yásnaya Polyána, his estate.

Anna Prókhorova, a peasant woman.  
Ánnushka, a servant.  
Desyatína, a land measure, about 2·7 acres.  
Dúmchin, an ex-Marshal of the Nobility.  
Eugene Ivánich Irténev (Jénya), a landed-proprietor.  
Fëdor Zakhárich Pryánishnikov, a gentleman.  
Iván (Ványa), a clerk.  
Kabúshka, a mare.  
Kalériya Vladímirovna Esípova, a lady.  
Koltóvski, an estate.  
Liza Ánnenskaya, Eugene's wife.  
Mary Pávlovna Irtényeva, Eugene's mother.  
Matvéy, a peasant.  
Misha, a man-servant.  
Nicholas Lysúkh, a servant.  
Nikoláy Semënich, a doctor.  
Parásha, a servant.  
Samókhin, a labourer.  
Semënovskoe, a village.  
Sídor Péchnikov, a peasant.  
Stepanída Péchnikova, Sídor's wife.

Tánya, a girl.

Varára Alexéevna Ánnenskaya, Liza's mother.

Vasíli Nikoláich, a steward.

Vásin, a peasant.

Yálta, a town in the Crimea.

Zémstvo, a Local Government institution.

Zenóvi, a peasant.

ë is pronounced as *yo*.

# CONTENTS

PREFACE

CHAPTER

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

X

XI

XII

XIII

XIV

XV

XVI

XVII

XVIII

XIX

XX

XXI

VARIATION OF THE CONCLUSION OF *THE DEVIL*

## PREFACE

Towards the end of 1880, when he was fifty-two, Tolstoy one day approached the young tutor who lived in his house at Yasnaya Polyana, and in great agitation asked him to do him a service. The tutor, seeing Tolstoy so moved, asked what he could possibly do for him. In an unready voice Tolstoy replied: "Save me, I am falling!" The tutor, in alarm, inquired what was the matter, to which Tolstoy replied: "I am overcome by sexual desire and feel a complete lack of power to restrain myself. I am in danger of yielding to the temptation. Help me!"

"I am a weak man myself," replied the tutor. "How can I help you?"

"You can, if only you won't refuse!"

"But what must I do to help you?"

"This! Come with me on my daily walks. We will go out together and talk, and the temptation will not occur to me."

They set out together, and Tolstoy told the tutor how during his daily walks he had encountered Domna, a young woman of twenty-two who had recently been engaged as the servants' cook. This Domna was a tall, healthy, attractive young woman with a fine figure and beautiful complexion, though not otherwise particularly handsome. At first for some days he had found it pleasant to watch her. Then he had followed her and whittled to her. After that he had walked and talked with her, and at last had arranged a rendezvous with her. The spot was

in a distant alley on the estate; to reach it from the house one had to pass the windows of the children's schoolroom. When setting out past those windows next day to keep the appointment, he had gone through a terrible struggle between the temptation and his conscience. Just then his second son had called to him through the window, reminding him of a Greek lesson that had been fixed for that day, and this had detained Tolstoy. He woke as it were, and was glad to have been saved from keeping the appointment. But the temptation still tormented him. He tried the effect of prayer, but it did not free him. He suffered but felt powerless and as if he might yield at any moment. So as a last resource he resolved to try the effect of making a full confession to someone—giving all particulars of the strength of the temptation that oppressed him and of his own weakness. He wished to feel as thoroughly ashamed of himself as possible, and he had decided to ask the tutor to accompany him on his daily walk, which usually he took alone. He also arranged that Domna should be removed to another place.

After the danger was over Tolstoy seldom referred to the incident unless to those who spoke to him of their own sexual difficulties, but on one occasion he wrote a full account of it to a friend.

The incident resulted in his writing this story, *The Devil*—the hero of which yields to a temptation such as that Tolstoy had encountered. It was composed some ten years later, but was not published during Tolstoy's lifetime; nor did it appear in the English edition of his posthumous works issued by Nelson & Sons. It is now translated into English for the first

time. Tolstoy had vividly imagined the consequences that might have resulted from yielding to the temptation, and used that mental experience for his story, employing fictitious characters placed in surroundings with which he was familiar and such as those amid which the incident had occurred.

The relations of the sexes in Russian society of his day resembled that in English society to-day more than in English society of that period—when, both in literature and in life, repression and suppression of passion was more common. When in *Kreutzer Sonata* and in *The Devil* he expressed the views he held, Tolstoy was consciously opposing the current of life around him, and these works also run counter to the movement of our own society to-day. That however does not detract from the value of the work. The belief that ill-results follow from the indulgence of the sexual instincts is not an obsolete eccentricity but a belief held by many men in many ages, and it receives sufficient confirmation from experience to make it certain that it is a view which has to be reckoned with.

The ancient conception of a bitter strife between the flesh and the spirit and of woman as the devil's chief agent in achieving man's spiritual destruction, is alien to the modern outlook, and to-day it is often not understood how and why men ever held such beliefs; but both in *The Kreutzer Sonata* and in this story Tolstoy makes us realize how easily and naturally men of a certain temperament may come to those convictions. Without adopting that view one is enabled to realize what others have felt, and to perceive how probable is a reaction from the unrestraint of to-day; as happened after the libertinage of the Restoration period.



I do not think there is any other important story of Tolstoy's that has not yet been translated. He left several trunks full of manuscripts, chiefly early drafts of works that had been published during his lifetime or commencements of stories he abandoned; but before his death he expressed the opinion that, except some passages in his Diaries, there was little or nothing worth publishing among those remains. He was indeed a great artist, and his mastery showed itself in knowing what to strike out, omit, and withhold. His published writings are voluminous, but among them there is little (except perhaps some of the later repetitions of his non-resistance doctrine) that we could willingly spare. But if the mass of documents which while he lived he had the good sense to suppress are now to be published, together with a large amount of didactic correspondence, it is likely to injure rather than to enhance his literary reputation. There is a disquieting rumour that this is to take place, in the form of an edition of his works extending to one hundred volumes. Not even that calamity will depose him from the place he securely holds as the greatest and most influential of Russian writers, but it will be an obstacle rather than a help to those who want to become acquainted with the works on which he wished his reputation to rest. The present story is an exception. It is so characteristic of him, and so closely connected with an event that influenced him, that it would be a pity for it not to be known, especially as it is one of the few posthumous works he left in a completed state; even in this case we do not know which of the two endings he wrote he would have adopted had he published it himself.

The foot-notes are by the translator.

AYLMER MAUDE

GREAT BADDOW, CHELMSFORD

*September 12, 1925.*

# **THE DEVIL**

## I

A brilliant career lay before Eugene Irtenev. He had all that was necessary for this: an admirable education at home, high honours when he graduated in law at Petersburg University, connections in the highest society through his recently deceased father, and he had himself already begun service in one of the Ministries under the protection of the Minister. He also had a fortune; even a large one, though insecure. His father had lived abroad and in Petersburg, allowing his sons, Eugene, and Andrew, the elder who was in the Horse Guards, 6,000 rubles a year each, while he himself and his wife spent a great deal. He only used to visit his estate for a couple of months in summer and did not concern himself with its direction, entrusting it all to an unscrupulous manager who also failed to attend to it, but in whom he had complete confidence.

After the father's death, when the brothers began to divide the property, there were found to be so many debts that their lawyer even advised them to refuse the inheritance and retain only an estate left them by their grand-mother, which was valued at 100,000 rubles. But a neighbouring landed-proprietor who had done business with old Irtenev, that is to say, who had promissory notes from him and had come to Petersburg on that account, said that in spite of the debts they could straighten out affairs so as to retain a large fortune—it would only be necessary to sell the forest and some outlying land, retaining the rich Semënov estate with 4,000 desyatinas of black-earth, the sugar-factory, and 200 desyatinas of water-

meadows—if one devoted oneself to the management and, settling on the estate, farmed it wisely and economically.

And so, having visited the estate in spring (his father had died in Lent), Eugene looked into everything, resolved to retire from the Civil Service, settle in the country with his mother, and undertake the management, with the object of preserving the main estate. He arranged with his brother, with whom he was very friendly, that he would pay him 4,000 rubles a year, or alternatively would pay him 80,000 in a lump sum, while Andrew, on his part, handed over to him his share of the inheritance.

So he arranged matters and, having settled down with his mother in the big house, ardently and yet cautiously began managing the estate.

It is generally supposed that Conservatives are usually old people, and those in favour of change are the young. That is not quite correct. The most usual Conservatives are young people: those who want to live but who do not think, and have not time to think, about how to live and who therefore take as a model for themselves a way of life that they have seen.

Thus it was with Eugene. Having settled in the village, his aim and ideal was to restore the form of life that had existed, not in his father's time—his father had been a bad manager—but in his grandfather's. And now in the house, the garden, in the estate-management—of course with changes suited to the times—he tried to resurrect the general spirit of his grandfather's life—everything on a large scale—good order, method, and everybody satisfied; but so to arrange things

entailed much work. It was necessary to meet the demands of the creditors and the banks, and for that purpose to sell some land and arrange renewals of credit. It was also necessary to get money to carry on (partly by farming out land, and partly by hiring labour) the immense operations on the Semënov estate, with its 400 desyatinas of ploughland and its sugar-factory, and to deal with the garden so that it should not seem to be neglected or in decay.

There was much work to do, but Eugene had plenty of strength—physical and mental. He was twenty-six, of medium height, strongly built, with muscles developed by gymnastics. He was full-blooded and very red over his whole neck, with bright teeth and lips and hair soft and curly, though not thick. His only physical defect was shortsightedness, which he had himself developed by using spectacles, so that he could not now do without a pince-nez, which had already formed a line at the top of his nose-ridge.

Such he was physically. For his spiritual portrait it might be said that the better anyone knew him the better they liked him. His mother had always loved him more than she loved anyone else; and now, after her husband's death, she concentrated on him not only her whole affection but her whole life. Nor was it only his mother who so loved him. All his comrades at the high-school and the university not merely liked him very much, but respected him. He had this effect on all who met him. It was impossible not to believe what he said, impossible to suspect any deception or falseness in one who had such an open, honest face and, in particular, such eyes.

In general his personality helped him much in his affairs. A creditor who would have refused another, trusted him. The clerk, the village Elder, or a peasant, who would have played a dirty trick and cheated someone else, forgot to deceive under the pleasant impression of intercourse with this kindly, agreeable, and above all candid man.

It was the end of May. Eugene had somehow managed, in town, to get the vacant land freed from the mortgage, so as to sell it to a merchant, and had borrowed money from that same merchant to replenish his stock, that is to say, to procure horses, bulls, carts and, chiefly, to begin to build a necessary farm-house. The matter had been arranged. The timber was being carted, the carpenters were already at work, and manure for the estate was being brought on eighty carts. But everything still hung by a thread.

## II

Amid these cares something came about which, though unimportant, tormented Eugene at the time. As a young man he had lived as all healthy young men live, that is, he had had relations with women of various kinds. He was not a libertine but, as he himself said, neither was he a monk. He only turned to this, however, in so far as was necessary for physical health and to have his mind free, as he used to say. This had begun when he was sixteen and had gone on satisfactorily. Satisfactorily in the sense that he did not give himself up to debauchery, was not once infatuated, and had never contracted a disease. At first he had a seamstress in Petersburg, then she got spoilt and he made other arrangements, and that side of his affairs was so well secured that it did not trouble him.

But now he was living in the country for the second month and did not at all know what he was to do. Compulsory self-restraint was beginning to have a bad effect on him.

Must he really go to town for that purpose? And where to? How? That was the only thing that disturbed Eugene Ivanich, but as he was convinced that the thing was necessary and that he needed it, it really became necessary, and he felt that he was not free and that involuntarily his eyes followed every young woman.

He did not approve of having relations with a married woman or a maid in his own village. He knew by report that both his father and grandfather had been quite different in this



matter from other land-owners of that time. At home they had never had any entanglements with peasant-women, and he had decided that he would not do so either; but afterwards, feeling himself ever more and more under compulsion, and imagining with horror what might happen to him in the neighbouring country town, and reflecting on the fact that the days of serfdom were now over, he decided that it might be done on the spot. Only it must be done so that no one should know of it, and not for the sake of debauchery but merely for health's sake—as he said to himself. And when he had decided this he became still more restless. When talking to the village Elder, the peasants, or the carpenters, he involuntarily brought the conversation round to women, and when it turned to women, he kept it on that theme. He noticed the women more and more.

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