

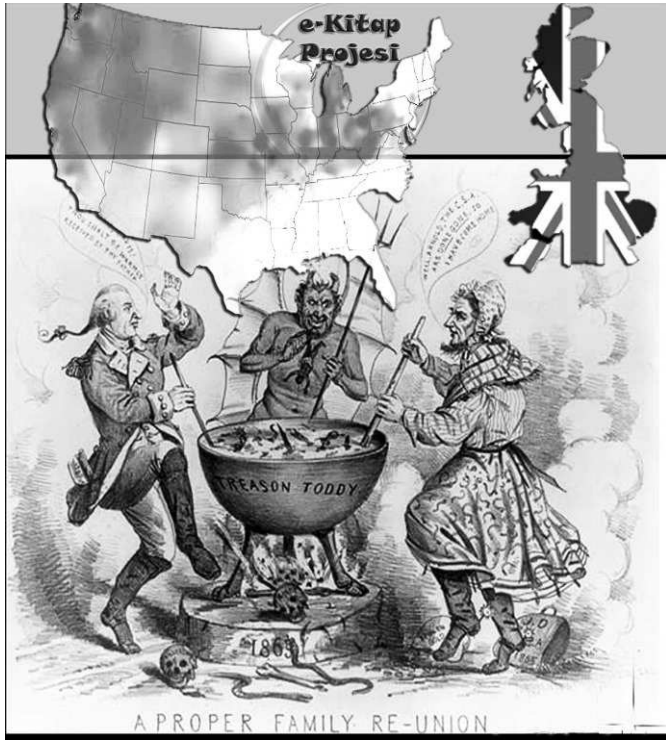
**THE DEVIL IN
BRITAIN AND
AMERICA**

THE DEVIL IN
BRITAIN AND
AMERICA

JOHN ASHTON

John Ashton
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PREFACE (ABOUT THE BOOK)



To my thinking, all modern English books on the Devil and his works are unsatisfactory. They all run in the same groove, give the same cases of witchcraft, and, moreover, not one of them is illustrated. I have endeavoured to remedy this by localizing my facts, and by reproducing all the engravings I could find suitable to my purpose.

I have also tried to give a succinct account of demonology and witchcraft in England and America, by adducing authorities not usually given, and by a painstaking research into old cases, carefully taking everything from original sources, and bringing to light very many cases never before republished.

The Devil in Britain & America

For the benefit of students, I have given—as an Appendix—a list of the books consulted in the preparation of this work, which, however, the student must remember is not an exhaustive bibliography on the subject, but only applies to this book, whose *raison d'être* is its localization.

The frontispiece is supposed to be the only specimen of Satanic caligraphy in existence, and is [Pg vi] taken from the 'Introductio in Chaldaicam Linguam,' etc., by Albonesi (Pavia, 1532). The author says that by the conjuration of Ludovico Spoletano the Devil was called up, and adjured to write a legible and clear answer to a question asked him. Some invisible power took the pen, which seemed suspended in the air, and rapidly wrote what is facsimiled. The writing was given to Albonesi (who, however, confesses that no one can decipher it), and his chief printer reproduced it very accurately. I am told by experts that in some of the characters may be found a trace of Amharic, a language spoken in its purity in the province of Amhara (Ethiopia), and which, according to a legend, was the primeval language spoken in Eden.

JOHN ASHTON.

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“THE DEVIL IN BRITAIN AND AMERICA”

BY
JOHN ASHTON
AUTHOR OF
‘SOCIAL ENGLAND UNDER THE REGENCY,’
‘SOCIAL LIFE IN THE REIGN
OF QUEEN ANNE,’ ‘VARIA,’ ETC.

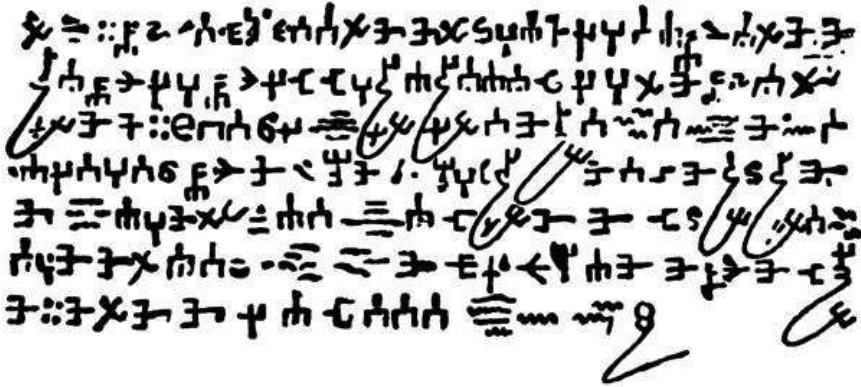
‘NAM UT VERE LOQUAMUR, SUPERSTITIO FUSA PER
GENTES OPPRESSIT OMNIUM FERE ANIMOS, ATQUE
HOMINUM IMBECILLITATEM OCCUPAVIT.’

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FACSIMILE OF THE ONLY KNOWN SPECIMEN OF THE DEVIL'S WRITING.

CHAPTER I



Universal Belief in the Personality of the Devil, as portrayed by the British Artist—Arguments in Favour of his Personality—Ballad—‘Terrible and Seasonable Warning to Young Men.’

The belief in a good and evil influence has existed from the earliest ages, in every nation having a religion. The Egyptians had their *Typho*, the Assyrians their *Ti-a-mat* (the Serpent), the Hebrews their *Beelzebub*, or *Prince of Flies*,^[1] and the Scandinavians their *Loki*. And many religions teach that the evil influence has a stronger hold upon mankind than the good influence—so great, indeed, as to nullify it in a large degree. Christianity especially teaches this: ‘Enter ye by the narrow gate;

for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it.' This doctrine of the great power of the Devil, or evil influence over man, is preached from every pulpit, under every form of Christianity, throughout the world; and although at the present time it is only confined to the greater *moral* power of the Devil over man, at an earlier period it was an article of belief that he was able to exercise a greater *physical* power.

This was coincident with a belief in his personality; and it is only in modern times that that personality takes an alluring form. In the olden days the Devil was always depicted as ugly and repulsive as the artist could represent him, and yet he could have learned a great deal from the modern Chinese and Japanese. The 'great God Pan,' although he was dead, was resuscitated in order to furnish a type for 'the Prince of Darkness'; and, accordingly, he was portrayed with horns, tail and cloven feet, making him an animal, according to a *mot* attributed to Cuvier, 'graminivorous, and decidedly ruminant'; while, to complete his classical *ensemble*, he was invested with the forked sceptre of Pluto, only supplemented with another tine.





The British artist thus depicted him, but occasionally he drew him as a 'fearful wild fowl' of a totally different type—yet always as hideous as his imagination could conceive, or his pencil execute.



That the Devil could show himself to man, in a tangible form, was, for many centuries, an article of firm belief, but, when it came to be argued out logically, it was difficult of proof. The only evidence that could be adduced which could carry conviction was from the Bible, which, of course, was taken as the *ipsissima verba* of God, and, on that, the old writers based all their proof. One of the most lucid of them, Gyfford or Gifford, writing in the sixteenth century, evidently feels this difficulty. Trying to prove that ‘Diuels can appeare in a bodily shape, and use speche and conference with men,’ he says:^[2]

‘Our Saviour Christ saith that a spirite hath neither flesh nor bones. A spirite hath a substance, but yet such as is invisible, whereupon it must needes be graunted, that Diuels in their owne nature have no bodilye shape, nor visible forme; moreover, it is against the truth, and against pietie to believe that Diuels can create, or make bodies, or change one body into another, for those things are proper to God. It followeth, therefore, that whensoever they appeare in a visible forme, it is no more but an apparition and counterfeit shewe of a bodie, unless a body be at any time lent them.’

And further on he thus speaks of the incarnation of Satan, as recorded in the Bible.

‘The Deuill did speake unto *Eua* out of the Serpent. A thing manifest to proue that Deuils can speake, unlesse we imagine that age hath made him forgetfull and tongue tyde. Some holde that there was no visible Serpent before *Eua*, but an invisible thing described after that manner, that we might be capable thereof.... But to let those goe, this is the chiefe and principall, for the matter which I have undertaken, to shewe euen by the very storye that there was not onely the Deuill, but, also, a very corporall beaste. If this question bee demaunded did *Eua* knowe there was anye Deuill, or any wicked reprobate Angels. What man of knowledge will say that she did? She did not as yet knowe good and euill. She knewe not the authour of euill. When the Lorde

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sayde unto hir, What is this which thou hast done? she answereth by and by, The serpent deceiued me. Shee saw there was one which had deceiued hir, shee nameth him a serpent; whence had she that name for the deuill whome shee had not imagined to bee? It is plaine that she speaketh of a thing which had, before this, receiued his name.

‘It is yet more euident by that she sayth, yonder serpent, or that serpent, for she noteth him out as pointing to a thing visible: for she useth the demonstratiue particle *He* in the Hebrew language, which seuereth him from other. Anie man of a sound mind may easilie see that *Eua* nameth and pointeth at a visible beast, which was nombred among the beastes of the fieldes.’

The Devil seems, with the exception of his entering into persons, not to have used his power of appearing corporeally until people became too holy for him to put up with, and many are the records in the Lives of the Saints of his appearance to these detestably good people—St. Anthony, to wit. Of course he always came off baffled and beaten, and, in the case of St. Dunstan, suffered acute bodily pain, his nose being pinched by the goldsmith-saint’s red-hot tongs. Yet even that did not deter him from again becoming visible, until, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of our era, he became absolutely familiar on this earth.

But, according to all the records that we possess, his mission no longer was to seduce the saints from their allegiance, and, having become more democratic, he mixed familiarly with the people, under different guises. Of course, his object was to secure the reversion of their souls at their decease, his bait usually being the promise of wealth in this life, or the gratification of some passion.

He found many victims, but yet he met with failures—two of which are recorded here.

A NEW BALLAD.

SHEWING THE GREAT MISERY SUSTAINED BY A POORE MAN
IN ESSEX, HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN, WITH OTHER STRANGE
THINGS DONE BY THE DEVILL.



A poore Essex man
that was in great distresse,
Most bitterly made his complaint,
in griefe and heavinesse:
Through scarcity and want,
he was oppressed sore,
He could not find his children bread,
he was so extreme poore.

His silly Wife, God wot,
being lately brought to bed,

The Devil in Britain & America

With her poore Infants at her brest
had neither drinke nor bread.

A wofull lying in
was this, the Lord doth know,
God keep all honest vertuous wives
from feeling of such woe.

My Husband deare, she said,
for want of food I die,
Some succour doe for me provide,
to ease my misery.
The man with many a teare,
most pittiously replyde,
We have no means to buy us bread;
with that, the Children cry'd.

They came about him round,
upon his coat they hung:
And pittiously they made their mone,
their little hands they wrung.
Be still, my boyes, said he,
And I'le goe to the Wood,
And bring some Acornes for to rost,
and you shall have some food.

Forth went the Wofull Man,
a Cord he tooke with him,
Wherewith to bind the broken wood,
that he should homewards bring:
And by the way as he went,
met Farmers two or three,
Desiring them for Christ his sake,

to helpe his misery.

Oh lend to me (he said)
one loafe of Barley-bread,
One pint of milke for my poore wife,
in Child-bed almost dead:
Thinke on my extreme need,
to lend me have no doubt,
I have no money for to pay,
but I will worke it out.

But they in churlish sort,
did one by one reply,
We have already lent you more
than we can well come by.
This answeere strooke his heart
as cold as any stone;
Unto the Wood from thence he went,
with many a grievous groane.

Where at the length (behold)
a tall man did him meet
And cole-black were his garments all
from head unto his feet.
Thou wretched man, said he,
why dost thou weep so sore?
What is the cause thou mak'st this mone,
tell me, and sigh no more.

Alas, good Sir (he said)
the lacke of some reliefe,
For my poore wife and children small,

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'tis cause of all my grieffe.
They lie all like to starve,
for want of bread (saith he);
Good Sir, vouchsafe therefore to give
one peny unto me.

Hereby this wretched man
committed wondrous evill,
He beg'd an almes, and did not know
he ask't it of the Devill.
But straight the hellish Fiend,
to him reply'd againe,
An odious sinner art thou then
that dost such want sustaine.

Alack (the poore man said)
this thing for truth I know,
That *Job* was just, yet never Man
endured greater woe.
The godly oft doe want,
and need doth pinch them sore,
Yet God will not forsake them quite,
but doth their states restore.

If thou so faithfull bee,
why goest thou begging then?
Thou shalt be fed as *Daniel* was
within the Lyon's den.
If thus thou doe abide,
the Ravens shall bring thee food,
As they unto *Elias* did
that wandred in the Wood.

Mocke not a wofull man,
good Sir, the poore man said,
Redouble not my sorrows so,
that are upon me laid.
But, rather, doe extend
unto my need, and give
One peny for to buy some bread,
my Children poore may live.

With that he opened straight
the fairest purse in sight
That ever mortal eye beheld,
fild up with crownes full bright.
Unto the wofull man
the same he wholly gave,
Who very earnestly did pray
that Christ his life might save.

Well, (quoth the damn'd Spirit)
goe, ease thy Children's sorrow,
And, if thou wantest anything,
come, meet me here to-morrow.
Then home the poore man went,
with cheerfull heart and mind,
And comforted his woful wife
with words that were most kind.

Take Comfort, Wife, he said,
I have a purse of Gold,
Now given by a Gentleman,
most faire for to behold.
And thinking for to pull

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his purse from bosome out,
He found nothing but Oken leaves,
bound in a filthy Clout.

Which, when he did behold,
with sorrowe pale and wan,
In desperate sort to seeke the purse,
unto the Wood he ran,
Supposing in his mind,
that he had lost it there;
He could not tell then what to think,
he was 'twixt hope and feare.

He had no sooner come
into the shady Grove,
The Devil met with him againe,
as he in fancy strove.
What seek'st thou here? he said,
the purse (quoth he) you gave,
Thus Fortune she hath crossed me,
and then the Devill said

Where didst thou put the Purse?
tell me, and do not lye,
Within my bosome, said the man,
where no man did come nigh.
Looke there againe, (quoth he)
then said the Man, I shall,
And found his bosome full of Toads,
as thicke as they could crawle.

The poore man at this sight,
to speak had not the power,
See (q'd the Devill) vengeance doth
pursue thee every hour.
Goe, cursed wretch, (quoth he)
and rid away thy life,
But murther first thy children young,
and miserable Wife.

The poore man, raging mad,
ran home incontinent,
Intending for to kill them all,
but God did him prevent.
For why, the chiefest man
that in the Parish dwelt,
With meat and money thither came,
which liberally he dealt.

Who, seeing the poore man
come home in such a rage,
Was faine to bind him in his bed,
his fury to asswage.
Where long he lay full sicke,
still crying for his Gold,
But, being well, this whole discourse
he to his neighbours told.

From all temptations,
Lord, keep both Great and Small,
And let no man, O heavenly God,
for want of succour fall.
But put their speciall trust

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in God for evermore,
Who will, no doubt, from misery
each faithfull man restore.

‘A TERRIBLE AND SEASONABLE WARNING TO YOUNG
MEN.



‘Being a very particular and True Relation of one *Abraham Joiner*, a young man about 17 or 18 Years of Age, living in *Shakesby’s Walks* in *Shadwell*, being a Ballast Man by Profession, who, on *Saturday Night* last, pick’d up a leud Woman, and spent what money he had about him in Treating her, saying afterwards, if she wou’d have any more he must go to the Devil for it, and, slipping out of her Company, he went to the

Cock and Lyon in King Street, the Devil appear'd to him, and gave him a Pistole, telling him *he shou'd never want for Money*, appointing to meet him the next Night, at the *World's End* at *Stepney*; Also how his Brother persuaded him to throw the Money away, which he did; but was suddenly taken in a very strange manner, so that they were fain to send for the Reverend Mr. Constable and other Ministers to pray with him; he appearing now to be very Penitent; with an Account of the Prayers and Expressions he makes use of under his Affliction, and the Prayers that were made for him, to free him from this violent Temptation.

'The Truth of which is sufficiently attested in the Neighbourhood, he lying now at his Mother's house,' etc.

Stepney seems to have been a favourite haunt of the Devil, for there is a tract published at Edinburgh, 1721, entitled 'A timely Warning to Rash and Disobedient Children. Being a strange and wonderful Relation of a young Gentleman in the Parish of *Stepheny*, in the Suburbs of *London*, that sold himself to the Devil for 12 Years, to have the Power of being revenged on his Father and Mother, and how, his Time being expired, he lay in a sad and deplorable Condition, to the Amazement of all Spectators.'

CHAPTER II

‘Strange and True News from Westmoreland’—‘The Politic Wife’—
‘How the Devill, though subtle, was gulld by a Scold’—‘The Devil’s
Oak’—Raising the Devil—Arguments in Favour of Devils—The
Numbers of Devils.



In the foregoing examples we have seen the Devil in human form, and properly appalled, but occasionally he showed himself in his supposed proper shape—when, of course, his intentions were at once perceived; and on one occasion we find him called upon by an Angel, to execute justice on a bad man. It is in

STRANGE AND TRUE NEWS FROM WESTMORELAND.

Attend good Christian people all,
Mark what I say, both old and young,
Unto the general Judgment day,
I think it is not very long.

A Wonder strange I shall relate,
I think the like was never shown,
In *Westmoreland* at *Tredenton*,
Of such a thing was never known.

One *Gabriel Harding* liv'd of late,
As may to all men just appear,
Whose yearly Rent, by just account,
Came to five hundred pound a year.

This man he had a Virtuous Wife,
In Godly ways her mind did give:
Yet he, as rude a wicked wretch,
As in this sinful Land did live.

Much news of him I will relate,
The like no Mortal man did hear;
'Tis very new, and also true,
Therefore, good Christians, all give ear.

One time this man he came home drunk,
As he us'd, which made his wife to weep,
Who straightway took him by the hand,
Saying, Dear Husband, lye down and sleepe.

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She lovingly took him by the arms,
Thinking in safety him to guide,
A blow he struck her on the breast,
The woman straight sank down and dy'd.

The Children with Mournful Cries
They ran into the open Street,
They wept, they wail'd, they wrung their hands,
To all good Christians they did meet.

The people then, they all ran forth,
Saying, Children, why make you such moan?
O, make you haste unto our house,
Our dear mother is dead and gone.

Our Father hath our Mother kill'd,
The Children they cryed then.
The people then they all made haste
And laid their hands upon the man.

He presently denied the same,
Said from Guilty Murder I am free,
If I did that wicked deed, he said,
Some example I wish to be seen by me.

Thus he forswore the wicked deed,
Of his dear Wife's untimely end.
Quoth the people, Let's conclude with speed,
That for the Coroner we may send.

Mark what I say, the door's fast shut,
The People the Children did deplore,

But straight they heard a Man to speak,
And one stood knocking at the door.

One in the house to the door made haste,
Hearing a Man to Knock and Call,
The door was opened presently,
And in he came amongst them all.

By your leave, good people, then he said,
May a stranger with you have some talk?
A dead woman I am come to see;
Into the room, I pray, Sir, walk.

His eyes like to the Stars did shine,
He was clothed in a bright grass green,
His cheeks were of a crimson red,
For such a man was seldome seen.

Unto the people then he spoke,
Mark well these words which I shall say,
For no Coroner shall you send,
I'm Judge and Jury here this day.

Bring hither the Man that did the deed,
And firmly hath denied the same.
They brought him into the room with speed,
To answer to this deed with shame.

Now come, O wretched Man, quoth he,
With shame before thy neighbours all,
Thy body thou hast brought to Misery,
Thy soul into a deeper thrall.

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Thy Chiefest delight was drunkenness,
And lewd women, O, cursed sin,
Blasphemous Oaths and Curses Vile
A long time thou hast wallowed in.

The Neighbours thou wouldst set at strife,
And alwaies griping of the poor,
Besides, thou hast murdered thy wife,
A fearful death thou dy'st therefore.

Fear nothing, good people, then he said,
A sight will presently appear,
Let all your trust be in the Lord,
No harm shall be while I am here.

Then in the Room the Devil appear'd,
Like a brave Gentleman did stand,
Satan (quoth he that was the Judge)
Do no more than thou hast command.

The Devil then he straight laid hold
On him that had murdered his wife,
His neck in Sunder then he broke,
And thus did end his wretched life.

The Devil then he vanished
Quite from the People in the Hall,
Which made the people much afraid,
Yet no one had no hurt at all.

Then straight a pleasant Melody
Of Musick straight was heard to sound,

It ravisht the hearts of those stood by,
So sweet the Musick did abound.

Now, (quoth this gallant Man in green)
With you I can no longer stay,
My love I leave, my leave I take,
The time is come, I must away.

Be sure to love each other well,
Keep in your breast what I do say.
It is the way to go to Heaven,
When you shall rise at Judgment day.

The people to their homes did go,
Which had this mighty wonder seen,
And said, it was an Angel sure
That thus was clothed all in green.

And thus the News from *Westmoreland*
I have related to you o'er,
I think it is as strange a thing,
As ever man did hear before.

In the old days the Devil was used as a butt at which people shot their little arrows of wit. In the miracle plays, when introduced, he filled the part of the pantaloon in our pantomimes, and was accompanied by a 'Vice,' who played practical jokes with him, slapping him with his wooden sword, jumping on his back, etc.; and in the carvings of our abbeys and cathedrals, especially in the Miserere seats in the choir, he was frequently depicted in comic situations, as also in the illuminations of manuscripts. He was often written about as being sadly deficient in

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brains, and many are the instances recorded of him being outwitted by a shrewd human being, as we may see by the following ballad.

THE POLITIC WIFE;

or, The Devil outwitted by a Woman.

Of all the plagues upon the earth,
That e'er poor man befall,
It's hunger and a scolding wife,
These are the worst of all:
There was a poor man in our country
Of a poor and low degree,
And with both these plagues he was troubled,
And the worst of luck had he.

He had seven children by one wife,
And the times were poor and hard,
And his poor toil was grown so bad,
He scarce could get him bread:
Being discontented in his mind,
One day his house he left,
And wandered down by a forest side,
Of his senses quite bereft.

As he was wandering up and down,
Betwixt hope and despair,
The Devil started out of a bush,
And appeared unto him there:
O what is the matter, the Devil he said,
You look so discontent?
Sure you want some money to buy some bread,

Or to pay your landlord's rent.

Indeed, kind sir, you read me right,
And the grounds of my disease,
Then what is your name, said the poor man,
Pray, tell me, if you please?
My name is Dumkin the Devil, quoth he,
And the truth to you I do tell,
Altho' you see me wandering here,
Yet my dwelling it is in hell.

Then what will you give me, said the Devil,
To ease you of your want,
And you shall have corn and cattle enough,
And never partake of scant?
I have nothing to give you, said the poor man,
Nor nothing here in hand,
But all the service that I can do,
Shall be at your command.

Then, upon the condition of seven long years,
A bargain with you I will frame,
You shall bring me a beast unto this place,
That I cannot tell his name:
But, if I tell its name full right,
Then mark what to you I tell,
Then you must go along with me
Directly unto Hell.

This poor man went home joyfully,
And thrifty he grew therefore,
For he had corn and cattle enough,

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And every thing good store.
His neighbours who did live around,
Did wonder at him much,
And thought he had robb'd or stole,
He was grown so wondrous rich.

Then for the space of seven long years
He lived in good cheer,
But when the time of his indenture grew near,
He began to fear:
O what is the matter, said his wife,
You look so discontent?
Sure you have got some maid with child,
And now you begin to repent.

Indeed, kind wife, you judge me wrong,
To censure so hard of me,
Was it for getting a maid with child,
That would be no felony:
But I have made a league with the Devil,
For seven long years, no more,
That I should have corn and cattle enough,
And everything good store.

Then for the space of seven long years
A bargain I did frame,
I should bring him a beast unto that place,
He could not tell its name:
But if he tell his name full right,
Then mark what to you I tell,
Then I must go along with him,
Directly unto Hell.

Go, get you gone, you silly old man,
Your cattle go tend and feed,
For a woman's wit is far better than a man's,
If us'd in time of need:
Go fetch me down all the birdlime you have,
And set it down on the floor,
And when I have pulled my cloathes all off,
You shall anoint me all o'er.

Now when he had anointed her
From the head unto the heel,
Zounds! said the man, methinks you look
Just like the very De'el.
Go, fetch me down all the feathers thou hast,
And lay them down by me,
And I will roll myself therein,
'Till never a place go free.

Come, tie a string about my neck,
And lead me to this place,
And I will save you from the Devil,
If I have but so much grace.
The Devil, he stood roaring out,
And looked both fierce and bold;
Thou hast brought me a beast unto this place,
And the bargain thou dost hold.

Come, shew me the face of this beast, said the Devil,
Come, shew it me in a short space;
Then he shewed him his wife's buttocks,
And swore it was her face:
She has monstrous cheeks, the Devil he said,

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As she now stands at length,
You'd take her for some monstrous beast
Taken by Man's main strength.

How many more of these beasts, said the Devil,
How many more of this kind?
I have seven more such, said the poor man,
But have left them all behind.
If you have seven more such, said the Devil,
The truth unto you I tell,
You have beasts enough to cheat me
And all the Devils in Hell.

Here, take thy bond and indenture both,
I'll have nothing to do with thee:
So the man and his wife went joyfully home
And lived full merrily.
O, God send us good merry long lives,
Without any sorrow or woe,
Now here's a health to all such wives
Who can cheat the Devil so.

There is

‘A Pleasant new Ballad you here may behold
How the Devill, though subtle, was gulld by a Scold.’



The story of this ballad is, that the Devil, being much amused with this scolding wife, went to fetch her. Taking the form of a horse, he called upon her husband, and told him to set her on his back. This was easily accomplished by telling her to *lead* the horse to the stable, which she refused to do.

‘Goe leade, sir Knave, quoth she,
and wherefore not, Goe ride?
She took the Devill by the reines,
and up she goes astride.’

And once on the Devil, she *rode* him; she kicked him, beat him, slit his ears, and kept him galloping all through Hell, until he could go no longer, when he concluded to take her home again to her husband.

‘Here, take her (quoth the Devill)
to keep her here be bold,
For Hell would not be troubled