

THE RECTOR OF CONCORET OR THE DEVIL TURNED RECTOR.



BY

G. H. DOBLE.

**A dramatized version of a Breton story (Recit du Braconnier,
in "Le Foyer Breton," by Emile Souvestre.)**

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THE DEVIL TURNED RECTOR.

CHARACTERS.

S. MICHAEL	-	-	-	-
SATAN	-	-	-	-
BIANN	-	-	-	-
Mme. BIANN	-	-	-	-
Mme. FLOC'HIK	-	-	-	-
GENOFA FLOC'HIK, her daughter	-	-	-	-
FIRST BROTHER RANNOU	-	-	-	-
SECOND	"	"	-	-
THIRD	"	(CADO)	-	-
SERVANT	-	-	-	-
FIRST INHABITANT OF CONCORET	-	-	-	-
SEIGNEUR DE GWEBRIANT	-	-	-	-



Église catholique
en Finistère

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THE DEVIL TURNED RECTOR.

SCENE I.

A country lane in the parish of Augan, in the forest of Broceliande, Brittany.

Choir sing Tibi, Christe, Splendor, Patris. (*New H. A. & M. 239, Plainsong.*)

Enter S. Michael.

Praise to the Lord. I have been doing His will in a fair corner of this land of Brittany, of which I am patron, as I am of Cornwall. Mine is the vision of the guarded Mount, here as there. Yesterday I took to Paradise the soul of the good Rector of Concoret. To-day the Lord sent me to bless the field of a poor widow in this parish of Augan, and she will soon have reason to give thanks to Him Who "blesseth her victuals with increase, and satisfieth the poor with bread."

Enter Satan, with a poppy in his mouth, a large sack under his arm, singing a ribald song.

M. Who's that? I don't altogether like the looks of him. (*Satan approaches.*) (*aside*) Why, it's old Nick himself. (*to Satan*) You here, foul spirit?

S. (Impudently.) Well, the high road belongs to everyone, doesn't it?

M. What have you been doing?

S. Oh, I've been making a visitation of my diocese. My colleague Death (they call him Ankou here), and I have been doing a little reaping; he cuts the corn, and I thresh it, and carry off the chaff.

M. What have you got in that sack?

S. Souls, all lost souls—Christian souls, too. I've a nice selection here—souls of innkeepers, bakers, farmers, cheating tradesmen, rascally lawyers, yes, and a lot of religious people as well, preachers and ministers and others.

M. Alas! was it in vain then that the Saviour drank the gall and vinegar upon the cross for the salvation of the children of Adam? And must He always see them fall back into your clutches? What right have you over His people?

S. (grinning.) The same right the fox has to the goodwife's henroost.

M. Well, look here, Satan. I'll strike a bargain with you. Give me those souls, and we'll let you live a whole day on earth free from torment.

S. And shall I keep my power?

M. Yes, on condition you use it to enrich men instead of plaguing them.

S. Done. Here are your souls. (*hands the sack to M.*)

M. And now, under what form would you like to appear among men?

S. The Rector of Concoret has just died, and gone to heaven. I'll take his place for a day. They'll think I'm the new Rector.

M. I agree, all the more willingly as all the souls in that parish belong to you already, for they are all sorcerers, as every one knows. There are only three Christian families there—the Bianns, the Floc'hik, and the Rannou brothers, and you can't do them any harm under the terms of our agreement. My Master accordingly removes the pain of damnation from you for the space of twelve hours. Go, poor wretch, leave your burning throne for a time, and rest yourself in this sweet, cool, green land of Brittany. *Exit.*

Curtain. Choir sing Holy Archangel Michael, defend us in our warfare, that we may not perish in the dreadful day of judgment, *and H. 437 to Breton Melodies No. 22.*

SCENE II. The Parish of Concoret.

Enter Satan, in cassock, bands and priest's hat.

S. Now for Concoret. *Enter two inhabitants of C.*

1st Inhab. I say, look what a simple young innocent we've got for our new Rector. He looks as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He doesn't know what naughty things we do here. *Exeunt.*

Enter the Bianns, the Floc'hik and the Rannous.

M. Biann. Bonjour, M. le Recteur, we be right glad to see 'ee. Last passon, he wore a saint, sure 'nuff. God rest his soul (*crosses himself*), sorry we were when he died. Here's my old woman, we be the oldest married couple in Concoret, here's mother Floc'hik, and here be the brothers Rannou. *All shake hands, saying, Bonjour, M. le Recteur.*

S. Thank you, good friends, it's a pleasure to see you. It is very good of you to come so soon to welcome me. I will return your call this very day, after I've had a little time for prayer in the parish church—let me see, it's this way, isn't it? *Kénavo! Exeunt.*

Curtain, Choir sing H. 583 to Breton Mel. No. 10. Do no sinful action.

SCENE III.

The Biann's cottage. Old Biann and his wife preparing a frugal meal.

Enter Satan.

S. Ah, good people, you see I've kept my word. (*sits down.*) I've heard of you, you're well spoken of everywhere as strict observers of the Law of the Lord and of the rules of the Church. Would that there were more like you.....But it's a poor meal you've got there. Don't you ever get better fare than that?

B. No, M. le Recteur, us be poor folks, us do belong to have meat soup once a month, and white bread once a year, on the day of the Pardon.

S. Don't you ever wish you had something better?

B. What's the good of wishing, M. le Curé? I won't say but that sometimes, when us have seen the provisions for the great house go by, us have wished us could dine like the gentry just once in our life before us do die. *B. and his wife sigh.*

S. Well, good people, your wish shall be satisfied. Here is a platter of beechwood, which the Mother of God once gave to a saint long ago. Its owners have only to say what they want to eat, and it will immediately appear on the platter. I can only let you have it for one day, though, as it is only fair that the other poor people of

the parish should have their turn, but that will be enough for you to know how the rich enjoy themselves. Make good use of your time.
Exit.

B. & Mme. B. Thanks, indeed, passon, you'm too good.

B. What shall us ask for?

Mme. B. I wish for a honey omelet and a figgy pudding. *It appears.*

Both. Oh! Oh! *Each seizes a morsel and begins to eat.*

B. Here, us oughtn't to begin with sweets. The gentry do allus begin with meat and finish with sweets.

Mme. B. Ask for a roasted calve's head.

B. And a quarter of lamb on a spit.

Mme. B. And a hare pie.

B. And smoked fritters.

Mme. B. And mind 'ee don't forget some white bread.

B. Iss, and some Bordeaux wine. *The food is placed on the table.*

Mme. B. (suddenly.) Christ, us have forgotten 'tes Good Friday.

B. Good Friday (*with his knife uplifted.*)

Mme. B. Iss, 'tes Good Friday, for sure, seeing yesterday was Thursday. Day of fasting and abstinence. What shall us do? Us'll be damned if us eats meat on Good Friday.

B. So us shall.....And yet 'tes only for to-day that us have got the magic platter.

Mme. B. Iss, for sure, the chance'll be gone tomorrow.

B. And 'twill never return.

Mme. B. Good God, to leave the hare pie.

B. Not to touch the quarter of lamb.

Mme. B. Nor the calve's head. *They look at the table disconsolately and sniff the savoury odour.*

B. 'Twould be a sin to leave so many good things.

Mme. B. Besides, passon said us could eat them.

B. Did he then?

Mme. B. Why, for sure, he told us to enjoy ourselves.

B. Iss, and he said the platter once belonged to a saint.

Mme. B. Then it can't lead us astray, 'tes a sacred thing.

B. Iss, and everything on it must be sacred too.

Mme. B. Then us can eat what's on it without sin?

B. Why, for sure, 'twill be a pious action.

Mme. B. Here goes then.

They fall to. The devil, who has been looking on through the keyhole, smiles a wicked smile, and goes away rubbing his hands.

Curtain. *Choir sing H. 484* Jesu, grant me this, I pray, to
B.M. 25.

SCENE IV.

The farm of Mme. Floe'hik. Mme. F. and her daughter Genofa.
(*Hammering heard at intervals.*)

Enter S., Mme. F. & G. (together) Bonjour, M. le Curé.

S. Bonjour, my good friends.

Mme. F. Will you sit here, M. le R.

S. Thank you, Madame.

Mme. F. What lovely spring weather we're having, Monsieur.

S. Lovely, Madame, I hope the harvest will be a good one this year.

Mme. F. I hope so too. We are suffering in this parish, M. le R., from a disease among the sheep, several of ours have died.

S. I am very grieved to hear it, Madame.

Mme. F. I am afraid you have come to a very difficult parish, M. le R., most of your parishioners are wicked and depraved men. You must have heard of the sorcerers of Concoret.

S. Alas! Madame, that people should sell themselves to Satan by wicked arts. I am afraid that there are many all round us going to the devil. Would that there were more like you, Madame.

Mme. F. Well, we try to do our best in this house, M. le Curé,And now perhaps you will excuse me, as I have to go to milk the cows. *Exit.*

S. I hear, Mademoiselle, that you are to be married as soon as Easter is over. Let me offer you my congratulations, and sincere wishes for your future happiness.

G. Yes, M. le Curé, I am engaged to my cousin. The barns on the farm are full of tailors working at my wedding dress and the dresses of the bridesmaids, and the hammering you hear is made by carpenters making new furniture for us.

S. (*takes the style of a preacher*) You are going, my young friend, to enter on a state of life full of troubles and difficulties, for which you must be prepared. When rich women get married *they* have nothing to do but dress themselves finely, drive to church in a carriage, and entertain their neighbours, but a farmer's wife must give up all thoughts of pleasure and all thought of rest. She has to go to bed late, get up before anyone else, and work as hard as any servant in the house.

G. (*pensively*) What you say is true, M. le R.

S. And then, the fortune of a farmer is much more uncertain than that of the gentry. Suppose the cattle plague comes, or a blight, he is ruined. And then it is specially the woman who suffers, for while her husband is out in the fields, she is in the house, listening to the pitiful crying of the hungry children, and the threats of the creditors who call.

G. (*fearfully*) Alas! M. le R., what you are saying is only too true!

S. Besides, those who work with their hands are often hard and violent-tempered, sometimes, I fear, they treat their wives like they do their cattle.

G. Christ! and Nedel beats his horses so!

S. (*unctuously*). You see, then, that God in His wisdom is sending you a heavy cross, my poor girl. Bless the hand that sends it, and thank Him that *you* are not a fine lady who knows nothing of life but its vanities and pleasures.

G. Yes, M. le R., I do, but (*sobbing*).....I hadn't thought of all you've been saying to-day (*covers her face in her apron*.)

S. (*sympathetically*.) Listen, poor child, I want to help you, and I will give you a charm which will assure the affection of your future husband. You see this iron ring, as black as your beautiful hair? It once belonged to a holy bishop, and it has this wonderful power—any man who puts it on his finger will become your faithful servant—were he prince or duke—and will do whatever you wish.

G. (*takes ring*.) O thank you ever so much, M. le R., it is good of you! Thank you, thank you! *Exit Satan.*

Genofa comes forward. Enter the young Seigneur de Gwebriant wearing spurs and holding a riding whip.

G. (*aside*.) Here's the S. de G., he isn't a marquis, but still I might try the charm on him, just to see if it really works as the Rector said. *Advances, pretending not to see him.*

S. de G. Ah, Genofa, good afternoon. I've just bought a very good horse from your cousin here. So you're going to marry him soon?

G. (*looking down*) Yes, Monsieur.

S. de G. I wish you every happiness, Genofa. What's that ring you've got on your finger?

G. I found it just now, Monsieur, cutting grass in the meadow.

S. de G. In that case it belongs to me, as I am your landlord, Genofa. *Smiling, he takes it from her. Then he looks at her with a fixed and eager gaze.* By Jove, Genofa, do you know, you're much too pretty a girl to marry a farmer? You're just the girl for me. I love you dearly, and I'll marry you, by Heaven I will. My horse is here—if you'll spring up on the saddle in front of me, I'll take you to my house in Vannes in an hour. *Seizes her and carries her off unresisting. S., who has all the time been hidden behind a barn, jumps for joy, and makes a fearful face.*

Curtain. Choir sing H. 487. O Jesus, I have promised. B.M. 38.

SCENE V.

A farmyard, in which the Rannou brothers are at work.

Enter Satan.

The 3 brothers (together.) Bonjour, M. le R., will you come in?

S. No thank you, my good friends, I see you're working, so I won't disturb you. I've only dropped in just to pass the time of day. Please go on.

1st brother. We're busy, as you see, making the little wooden plough shares we use in this country.

2nd brother. We always have to be doing this, M. le R., for though we use good pieces of elmwood, prepared by the best carpenter in Augan, our land is so hard and heavy, that it needs all our strength to make a furrow in it.

Cado. And often we have to stop the plough and make alterations in it twice a day, and you can imagine how that wastes time.

S. I understand, my dear fellows, and I should be glad to do anything to help you.....You see this blade? It was forged long ago by S. Joseph himself. When you place it in the plough, the plough works itself, and makes three furrows while you would only make one with your old-fashioned implements. I shall be glad to make you a present of it, but it must belong to one of you—how shall we manage?

1st br. Let's draw lots for it with three pieces of straw, the one who draws the shortest wins.

They do so, and Cado wins. S. gives him the share, clapping the other brothers on the shoulder and saying, Don't be jealous of your younger brother. *Exit.*

Cado goes out to try his present. His brothers whisper in a discontented way, while the choir sings H. 618. We are soldiers of Christ. *B.M. 40.*

Re-enter Cado. I say, this plough share is a marvel, it skims across the field like a swallow, and cuts a furrow a foot deep.

1st br. (to 2nd br.) He always has all the luck. Why shouldn't we have had that share?

Cado. Don't talk about luck there. It's God's Providence has given me this, and it must be because He saw I deserved it most.

2nd br. You think a lot of yourself, you do.

Cado. I've got reason to. I'll make my fortune with this here plough share, and then I'll ride along in my carriage, while you slave in my fields.

1st br. You spiteful viper. Take care or we'll take your pride down.

Cado. Come and try, *(lifting a big fork)* *The two brothers rush on him, C. groans and falls. S., concealed behind a hedge, roars with laughter. Curtain. Choir sing H. 434.* Christians, seek not yet repose. *B.M. 3.*

SCENE VI. The Presbytery.

The Rector is seated at the table. He rings. Enter servant.

S. I told you to let me have a good supper of roasted pork, and to send to the village inn for enough cider to make the twelve hardest drinkers in Guemené drunk.

Servant. Yes, M. le Curé. *Exit.*

Supper is served. The servant goes out but comes running in with a horrified expression. Oh! M. le R., a terrible thing has happened! Poor old Biann and his wife have been found dead in their cottage! It seems that they had overeaten themselves.

S. That's good news! Bring me in some champagne.

Exit servant. After a moment she comes back. Oh! M. le R., what do you think? The young seigneur de Gwebriant has gone off with Genofa Floc'hik, her that was to have been married after Easter, he carried her away with him on horseback, and the horse stumbled and fell into that there quarry on the road to Vannes, and they've both broken their necks!

S. gets up and dances. Hurrah! Hurrah! Here, girl, bring me in the best salad you can get. *Exit servant.*

Re-enter servant. Oh heavens, M. l'abbé, what a dreadful day this has been! they do say that the two elder Rannous quarrelled with their brother Cado, and they've killed him, and now they've gone and hanged themselves in despair! Jeanne has seen them hanging in that there barn of their's.

Satan screams for joy. Three cheers! Brandy, girl, bring brandy.

Exit servant, returns with brandy. As S. is emptying the last glass S. Michael enters. Time's up now, Satan, you must go back to hell.

S. Alright, Michael, I've done a good day's work. I shall have very good company, I'm taking with me the only righteous souls you had in the parish. You told me not to plague them, but only to enrich them, and I've kept my word. Tell your Master that the surest way to ruin souls is to make everything prosper for them, for more souls have been lost through prosperity than through adversity.

M. drives S. out, then he returns and says Yes, you see, even the devil speaks truth sometimes.....And, Oh! if only Christians took as much trouble doing good as the devil does in doing harm. *Curtain. H. 485, Be Thou my Guardian and my Guide. -B.M. 48.*

Audience rises and sings H. 413, Soldiers, who are Christ's below.

THE END.



THE SORCERERS OF CONCORET.

In the 12th century there lived at Concoret a man named Eon. Going to church one day, he heard a prayer chanted which ended "per Eum qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos." He at once concluded that this "Eum" meant himself. He gathered a band of disciples, whom he entertained to magic banquets in the forest of Brocéliande. One he named Judgement, another Science, another Wisdom, etc. Looking one day again at the collect, he noticed that after "mortuos" came the words "per ignem," so he and his disciples decided at once to begin their work by burning churches and castles. He was arrested by the Duke of Brittany, tried by Pope Eugenius at the Council of Rheims, and imprisoned for life. Many of his followers were burned before Eonism was stamped out. Ever since, the people of Concoret have had, in the Pays de Vannes, the reputation of being sorcerers. The last sorcerer of Concoret died quite recently.

NOTE.—Hymn 437 (Soldiers of Christ, arise) has the following chorus sung after each verse :—

Resist in faith
The lion's onslaught fell,
The serpent's craft,
And all the snares of hell.

The Breton Melodies, and Stage Directions for Scene 3, can be had from the Author, Rev. G. H. DOBLE, Wendron Vicarage, Helston, Cornwall.