



***LEONID
ANDREYEV***

***SATAN'S
DIARY***

Leonid Andreyev

Satan's Diary

EAN 8596547318880

DigiCat, 2022

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PREFACE

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SATAN'S DIARY," Leonid Andreyev's last work, was completed by the great Russian a few days before he died in Finland, in September, 1919. But a few years ago the most popular and successful of Russian writers, Andreyev died almost penniless, a sad, tragic figure, disillusioned, broken-hearted over the tragedy of Russia.

A year ago Leonid Andreyev wrote me that he was eager to come to America, to study this country and familiarize Americans with the fate of his unfortunate countrymen. I arranged for his visit to this country and informed him of this by cable. But on the very day I sent my cable the sad news came from Finland announcing that Leonid Andreyev died of heart failure.

In "Satan's Diary" Andreyev summed up his boundless disillusionment in an absorbing satire on human life. Fearlessly and mercilessly he hurled the falsehoods and hypocrisies into the face of life. He portrayed Satan coming to this earth to amuse himself and play. Having assumed the form of an American multi-millionaire, Satan set out on a tour through Europe in quest of amusement and adventure. Before him passed various forms of spurious virtues, hypocrisies, the ruthless cruelty of man and the often deceptive innocence of woman. Within a short time Satan finds himself outwitted, deceived, relieved of his millions, mocked, humiliated, beaten by man in his own devilish devices.

The story of Andreyev's beginning as a writer is best told in his autobiography which he gave me in 1908.

"I was born," he said, "in Oryol, in 1871, and studied there at the gymnasium. I studied poorly; while in the seventh class I was for a whole year known as the worst student, and my mark for conduct was never higher than 4, sometimes 3. The most pleasant time I spent at school, which I recall to this day with pleasure, was recess time between lessons, and also the rare occasions when I was sent out from the classroom.... The sunbeams, the free sunbeams, which penetrated some cleft and which played with the dust in the hallway—all this was so mysterious, so interesting, so full of a peculiar, hidden meaning.

"When I studied at the gymnasium my father, an engineer, died. As a university student I was in dire need. During my first course in St. Petersburg I even starved—not so much out of real necessity as because of my youth, inexperience, and my inability to utilize the unnecessary parts of my costume. I am to this day ashamed to think that I went two days without food at a time when I had two or three pairs of trousers and two overcoats which I could have sold.

"It was then that I wrote my first story—about a starving student. I cried when I wrote it, and the editor, who returned my manuscript, laughed. That story of mine remained unpublished.... In 1894, in January, I made an unsuccessful attempt to kill

myself by shooting. As a result of this unsuccessful attempt I was forced by the authorities into religious penitence, and I contracted heart trouble, though not of a serious nature, yet very annoying. During this time I made one or two unsuccessful attempts at writing; I devoted myself with greater pleasure and success to painting, which I loved from childhood on. I made portraits to order at 3 and 5 rubles a piece.

“In 1897 I received my diploma and became an assistant attorney, but I was at the very outset sidetracked. I was offered a position on *The Courier*, for which I was to report court proceedings. I did not succeed in getting any practice as a lawyer. I had only one case and lost it at every point.

“In 1898 I wrote my first story—for the Easter number—and since that time I have devoted myself exclusively to literature. Maxim Gorky helped me considerably in my literary work by his always practical advice and suggestions.”

Andreyev's first steps in literature, his first short stories, attracted but little attention at the time of their appearance. It was only when Countess Tolstoy, the wife of Leo Tolstoy, in a letter to the *Novoye Vremya*, came out in “defense of artistic purity and moral power in contemporary literature,” declaring that Russian society, instead of buying, reading and making famous the works of the Andreyevs, should “rise against such filth with indignation,” that almost everybody who knew how to read in Russia turned to the little volume of the young writer.

In her attack upon Andreyev, Countess Tolstoy said as follows:

“The poor new writers, like Andreyev, succeeded only in concentrating their attention on the filthy point of human degradation and uttered a cry to the undeveloped, half-intelligent reading public, inviting them to see and to examine the decomposed corpse of human degradation and to close their eyes to God’s wonderful, vast world, with the beauties of nature, with the majesty of art, with the lofty yearnings of the human soul, with the religious and moral struggles and the great ideals of goodness—even with the downfall, misfortunes and weaknesses of such people as Dostoyevsky depicted.... In describing all these every true artist should illumine clearly before humanity not the side of filth and vice, but should struggle against them by illumining the highest ideals of good, truth, and the triumph over evil, weakness, and the vices of mankind.... I should like to cry out loudly to the whole world in order to help those unfortunate people whose wings, given to each of them for high flights toward the understanding of the spiritual light, beauty, kindness, and God, are clipped by these Andreyevs.”

This letter of Countess Tolstoy called forth a storm of protest in the Russian press, and, strange to say, the representatives of the fair sex were among the warmest defenders of the young author. Answering the attack, many

women, in their letters to the press, pointed out that the author of "Anna Karenina" had been abused in almost the same manner for his "Kreutzer Sonata," and that Tolstoy himself had been accused of exerting just such an influence as the Countess attributed to Andreyev over the youth of Russia. Since the publication of Countess Tolstoy's condemnation, Andreyev has produced a series of masterpieces, such as "The Life of Father Vassily," a powerful psychological study; "Red Laughter," a war story, "written with the blood of Russia;" "The Life of Man," a striking morality presentation in five acts; "Anathema," his greatest drama; and "The Seven Who Were Hanged," in which the horrors of Russian life under the Tsar were delineated with such beautiful simplicity and power that Turgenev, or Tolstoy himself, would have signed his name to this masterpiece.

Thus the first accusations against Andreyev were disarmed by his artistic productions, permeated with sincere, profound love for all that is pure in life. Dostoyevsky and Maupassant depicted more subjects, such as that treated in "The Abyss," than Andreyev. But with them these stories are lost in the great mass of their other works, while in Andreyev, who at that time had as yet produced but a few short stories, works like "The Abyss" stood out in bold relief.

I recall my first meeting with Leonid Andreyev in 1908, two weeks after my visit to Count Leo Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana. At that time he had already become the most popular Russian writer, his popularity having overshadowed even that of Maxim Gorky.

As I drove from Terioki to Andreyev's house, along the dust-covered road, the stern and taciturn little Finnish driver suddenly broke the silence by saying to me in broken Russian:

"Andreyev is a good writer.... Although he is a Russian, he is a very good man. He is building a beautiful house here in Finland, and he gives employment to many of our people."

We were soon at the gate of Andreyev's beautiful villa—a fantastic structure, weird-looking, original in design, something like the conception of the architect in the "Life of Man."

"My son is out rowing with his wife in the Gulf of Finland," Andreyev's mother told me. "They will be back in half an hour."

As I waited I watched the seething activity everywhere on Andreyev's estate. In Yasnaya Polyana, the home of Count Tolstoy, everything seemed long established, fixed, well-regulated, serenely beautiful. Andreyev's estate was astir with vigorous life. Young, strong men were building the House of Man. More than thirty of them were working on the roof and in the yard, and a little distance away, in the meadows, young women and girls, bright-eyed and red faced, were haying. Youth, strength, vigor everywhere, and above all the ringing laughter of little children at play. I could see from the window the "Black Little River," which sparkled in the sun hundreds of feet below. The constant noise of the workmen's axes and hammers was so loud that I did not notice when Leonid Andreyev entered the room where I was waiting for him.

“Pardon my manner of dressing,” he said, as we shook hands. “In the summer I lead a lazy life, and do not write a line. I am afraid I am forgetting even to sign my name.”

I had seen numerous photographs of Leonid Andreyev, but he did not look like any of them. Instead of a pale-faced, sickly-looking young man, there stood before me a strong, handsome, well-built man, with wonderful eyes. He wore a grayish blouse, black, wide pantaloons up to his knees, and no shoes or stockings.

We soon spoke of Russian literature at the time, particularly of the drama.

“We have no real drama in Russia,” said Andreyev. “Russia has not yet produced anything that could justly be called a great drama. Perhaps ‘The Storm,’ by Ostrovsky, is the only Russian play that may be classed as a drama. Tolstoy’s plays cannot be placed in this category. Of the later writers, Anton Chekhov came nearest to giving real dramas to Russia, but, unfortunately, he was taken from us in the prime of his life.”

“What do you consider your own ‘Life of Man’ and ‘To the Stars’?” I asked.

“They are not dramas; they are merely presentations in so many acts,” answered Andreyev, and, after some hesitation, added: “I have not written any dramas, but it is possible that I will write one.” At this point Andreyev’s wife came in, dressed in a Russian blouse. The conversation turned to America, and to the treatment accorded to Maxim Gorky in New York.

“When I was a child I loved America,” remarked Andreyev. “Perhaps Cooper and Mayne Reid, my favorite

authors in my childhood days, were responsible for this. I was always planning to run away to America. I am anxious even now to visit America, but I am afraid—I may get as bad a reception as my friend Gorky got.”

He laughed as he glanced at his wife. After a brief pause, he said:

“The most remarkable thing about the Gorky incident is that while in his stories and articles about America Gorky wrote nothing but the very worst that could be said about that country he never told me anything but the very best about America. Some day he will probably describe his impressions of America as he related them to me.”

It was a very warm day. The sun was burning mercilessly in the large room. Mme. Andreyev suggested that it would be more pleasant to go down to a shady place near the Black Little River.

On the way down the hill Andreyev inquired about Tolstoy’s health and was eager to know his views on contemporary matters.

“If Tolstoy were young now he would have been with us,” he said.

We stepped into a boat, Mme. Andreyev took up the oars and began to row. We resumed our conversation.

“The decadent movement in Russian literature,” said Andreyev, “started to make itself felt about ten or fifteen years ago. At first it was looked upon as mere child’s play, as a curiosity. Now it is regarded more seriously. Although I do not belong to that school, I do not consider it worthless. The fault with it is that it has but few talented people in its ranks, and these few direct the criticism of the decadent

school. They are the writers and also the critics. And they praise whatever they write. Of the younger men, Alexander Blok is perhaps the most gifted. But in Russia our clothes change quickly nowadays, and it is hard to tell what the future will tell us—in our literature and our life.

“How do I picture to myself this future?” continued Andreyev, in answer to a question of mine. “I cannot know even the fate and future of my own child; how can I foretell the future of such a great country as Russia? But I believe that the Russian people have a great future before them—in life and in literature—for they are a great people, rich in talents, kind and freedom-loving. Savage as yet, it is true, very ignorant, but on the whole they do not differ so much from other European nations.”

Suddenly the author of “Red Laughter” looked upon me intently, and asked: “How is it that the European and the American press has ceased to interest itself in our struggle for emancipation? Is it possible that the reaction in Russia appeals to them more than our people’s yearnings for freedom, simply because the reaction happens to be stronger at the present time? In that event, they are probably sympathizing with the Shah of Persia! Russia today is a lunatic asylum. The people who are hanged are not the people who should be hanged. Everywhere else honest people are at large and only criminals are in prison. In Russia the honest people are in prison and the criminals are at large. The Russian Government is composed of a band of criminals, and Nicholas II is not the greatest of them. There are still greater ones. I do not hold that the Russian Government alone is guilty of these horrors. The European

nations and the Americans are just as much to blame, for they look on in silence while the most despicable crimes are committed. The murderer usually has at least courage, while he who looks on silently when murder is committed is a contemptible weakling. England and France, who have become so friendly to our Government, are surely watching with compassion the poor Shah, who hangs the constitutional leaders. Perhaps I do not know international law. Perhaps I am not speaking as a practical man. One nation must not interfere with the internal affairs of another nation. But why do they interfere with our movement for freedom? France helped the Russian Government in its war against the people by giving money to Russia. Germany also helped—secretly. In well-regulated countries each individual must behave decently. When a man murders, robs, dishonors women he is thrown into prison. But when the Russian Government is murdering helpless men and women and children the other Governments look on indifferently. And yet they speak of God. If this had happened in the Middle Ages a crusade would have been started by civilized peoples who would have marched to Russia to free the women and the children from the claws of the Government.”

Andreyev became silent. His wife kept rowing for some time slowly, without saying a word. We soon reached the shore and returned silently to the house. That was twelve years ago.

I met him several times after that. The last time I visited him in Petrograd during the July riots in 1917.

A literary friend thus describes the funeral of Leonid Andreyev, which gives a picture of the tragedy of Russia:

“In the morning a decision had to be reached as to the day of the funeral. It was necessary to see to the purchase and the delivery of the coffin from Viborg, and to undertake all those unavoidable, hard duties which are so painful to the family.

“It appeared that the Russian exiles living in our village had no permits from the Finnish Government to go to Viborg, nor the money for that expense. It further appeared that the family of Leonid Andreyev had left at their disposal only one hundred marks (about 6 dollars), which the doctor who had come from the station after Andreyev’s death declined to take from the widow for his visit.

“This was all the family possessed. It was necessary to charge a Russian exile living in a neighboring village, who had a pass for Viborg, with the sad commission of finding among some wealthy people in Viborg who had known Andreyev the means required for the funeral.

“On the following day mass was read. Floral tributes and wreaths from Viborg, with black inscriptions made hastily in ink on white ribbons, began to arrive. They were all from private individuals. The local refugees brought garlands of autumn foliage, bouquets of late flowers. Their children laid their carefully woven, simple and touching little childish wreaths at the foot of the coffin. Leonid Andreyev’s widow did not wish to inter the body in foreign soil and it was decided, temporarily, until burial in native ground, to leave his body in the little mortuary in the park on the estate of a local woman landowner.

“The day of the funeral was not widely known. The need for special permits to travel deprived many of the opportunity to attend. In this way it happened that only a very small group of people followed the body from the house to the mortuary. None of his close friends was there. They, like his brothers, sister, one of his sons, were in Russia. Neighbors, refugees, acquaintances of the last two years with whom his exile had accidentally thrown him into contact, people who had no connection with Russian literature,—almost all alien in spirit—such was the little group of Russians that followed the coffin of Leonid Andreyev to its temporary resting place.

“It was a tragic funeral, this funeral in exile, of a writer who is so dearly loved by the whole intellectual class of Russia; whom the younger generation of Russia acclaimed with such enthusiasm.

“Meanwhile he rests in a foreign land, waiting—waiting for Free Russia to demand back his ashes, and pay tribute to his genius.”

Among his last notes, breathing deep anguish and despair, found on his desk, were the following lines:

“Revolution is just as unsatisfactory a means of settling disputes as is war. If it be impossible to vanquish a hostile idea except by smashing the skull in which it is contained; if it be impossible to appease a hostile heart except by piercing it with a bayonet, then, of course, fight....”

Leonid Andreyev died of a broken heart. But the spirit of his genius is deathless.

HERMAN BERNSTEIN.

New York, September.

Satan's Diary

SATAN'S DIARY

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January 18.

On board the *Atlantic*.

This is exactly the tenth day since I have become human and am leading this earthly life.

My loneliness is very great. I am not in need of friends, but I must speak of Myself and I have no one to speak to. Thoughts alone are not sufficient, and they will not become quite clear, precise and exact until I express them in words. It is necessary to arrange them in a row, like soldiers or telephone poles, to lay them out like a railway track, to throw across bridges and viaducts, to construct barrows and enclosures, to indicate stations in certain places—and only then will everything become clear. This laborious engineering work, I think, they call logic and consistency, and is essential to those who desire to be wise. It is not essential to all others. They may wander about as they please.

The work is slow, difficult and repulsive for one who is accustomed to—I do not know what to call it—to embracing all in one breath and expressing all in a single breath. It is not in vain that men respect their thinkers so much, and it is

not in vain that these unfortunate thinkers, if they are honest and conscientious in this process of construction, as ordinary engineers, end in insane asylums. I am but a few days on this earth and more than once have the yellow walls of the insane asylum and its luring open door flashed before my eyes.

Yes, it is extremely difficult and irritates one's "nerves." I have just now wasted so much of the ship's fine stationery to express a little ordinary thought on the inadequacy of man's words and logic. What will it be necessary to waste to give expression to the great and the unusual? I want to warn you, my earthly reader, at the very outset, not to gape in astonishment. The *extraordinary cannot be expressed* in the language of your grumbling. If you do not believe me, go to the nearest insane asylum and listen to the inmates: they have all realized *Something* and wanted to give expression to it. And now you can hear the roar and rumble of these wrecked engines, their wheels revolving and hissing in the air, and you can see with what difficulty they manage to hold intact the rapidly dissolving features of their astonished faces!

I see you are all ready to ply me with questions, now that you learned that I am Satan in human form: it is so fascinating! Whence did I come? What are the ways of Hell? Is there immortality there, and, also, what is the price of coal at the stock exchange of Hell? Unfortunately, my dear reader, despite my desire to the contrary, if I had such a desire, I am powerless to satisfy your very proper curiosity. I could have composed for your benefit one of those funny little stories about horny and hairy devils, which appeal so

much to your meagre imagination, but you have had enough of them already and I do not want to lie so rudely and ungracefully. I will lie to you elsewhere, when you least expect it, and that will be far more interesting for both of us.

And the truth—how am I to tell it when even my Name cannot be expressed in your tongue? You have called me Satan and I accept the name, just as I would have accepted any other: Be it so—I am Satan. But my real name sounds quite different, quite different! It has an extraordinary sound and try as I may I cannot force it into your narrow ear without tearing it open together with your brain: Be it so—I am Satan. And nothing more.

And you yourself are to blame for this, my friend: why is there so little understanding in your reason? Your reason is like a beggar's sack, containing only crusts of stale bread, while it is necessary to have something more than bread. You have but two conceptions of existence: life and death. How, then, can I reveal to you the *third*? All your existence is an absurdity only because you do not have this *third conception*. And where can I get it for you? To-day I am human, even as you. In my skull is your brain. In my mouth are your cubic words, jostling one another about with their sharp corners, and I cannot tell you of the Extraordinary.

If I were to tell you that there are no devils I would lie. But if I say that such creatures do exist I also deceive you. You see how difficult it is, how absurd, my friend!

I can also tell you but little that you would understand of how I assumed the human form, with which I began my earthly life ten days ago. First of all, forget about your favorite, hairy, horny, winged devils, who breathe fire,

transform fragments of earthenware into gold and change old men into fascinating youths, and having done all this and prattled much nonsense, they disappear suddenly through a wall. Remember: when *we* want to visit your earth *we* must always become human. Why this is so you will learn after your death. Meanwhile remember: I am a human being now like yourself. There is not the foul smell of a goat about me but the fragrance of perfume, and you need not fear to shake My hand lest I may scratch you with my nails: I manicure them just as you do.

But how did it all happen? Very simply. When I first conceived the desire to visit this earth I selected as the most satisfactory lodging a 38-year-old American billionaire, Mr. Henry Wondergood. I killed him at night,—of course, not in the presence of witnesses. But you cannot bring me to court despite this confession, because the American is ALIVE, and we both greet you with one respectful bow: I and Wondergood. He simply rented his empty place to me. You understand? And not all of it either, the devil take him! And, to my great regret I can *return* only through the same door which leads you too to liberty: through death.

This is the most important thing. You may understand something of what I may have to say later on, although to speak to you of such matters in your language is like trying to conceal a mountain in a vest pocket or to empty Niagara with a thimble. Imagine, for example, that you, my dear King of Nature, should want to come closer to the ants, and that by some miracle you became a real little ant,—then you may have some conception of that gulf which separates Me now from what I was. No, still more! Imagine that you were

a sound and have become a mere symbol—a musical mark on paper.... No, still worse!—No comparisons can make clear to you that terrible gulf whose bottom even I do not see as yet. Or, perhaps, there is no bottom there at all.

Think of it: for two days, after leaving New York, I suffered from seasickness! This sounds queer to you, who are accustomed to wallow in your own dirt? Well, I—I have also wallowed in it but it was not queer at all. I only smiled once in thinking that *it* was not I, but Wondergood, and said:

“Roll on, Wondergood, roll on!”

There is another question to which you probably want an answer: Why did I come to this earth and accept such an unprofitable exchange: to be transformed from Satan, “the mighty, immortal chieftain and ruler” into you? I am tired of seeking words that cannot be found. I will answer you in English, French, Italian or German—languages we both understand well. I have grown lonesome in Hell and I have come upon the earth to lie and play.

You know what ennui is. And as for falsehood, you know it well too. And as for *play*—you can judge it to a certain extent by your own theaters and celebrated actors. Perhaps you yourself are playing a little rôle in Parliament, at home, or in your church. If you are, you may understand something of the *satisfaction* of play. And, if in addition, you are familiar with the multiplication table, then multiply the delight and joy of play into any considerable figure and you will get an idea of My enjoyment, of My play. No, imagine that you are an ocean wave, which plays eternally and lives only in play—take this wave, for example, which I see outside the porthole now and which wants to lift our

“Atlantic”...but, here I am again seeking words and comparisons!

I simply want to play. At present I am still an unknown actor, a modest débutante, but I hope to become no less a celebrity than your own Garrick or Aldrich, after I have played what I please. I am proud, selfish and even, if you please, vain and boastful. You know what vanity is, when you crave the praise and plaudits even of a fool? Then I entertain the brazen idea that I am a genius. Satan is known for his brazenness. And so, imagine, that I have grown weary of Hell where all these hairy and horny rogues play and lie no worse than I do, and that I am no longer satisfied with the laurels of Hell, in which I but perceive no small measure of base flattery and downright stupidity. But I have heard of you, my earthly friend; I have heard that you are wise, tolerably honest, properly incredulous, responsive to the problems of eternal art and that you yourself play and lie so badly that you might appreciate the playing of others: not in vain have you so many *great actors*. And so I have come. You understand?

My stage is the earth and the nearest scene for which I am now bound is Rome, the Eternal City, as it is called here, in your profound conception of eternity and other simple matters. I have not yet selected my company (would you not like to join it?). But I believe that *Fate* and *Chance*, to whom I am now subservient, like all your earthly things, will realize my unselfish motives and will send me worthy partners. Old Europe is so rich in talents! I believe that I shall find a keen and appreciative audience in Europe, too. I confess that I first thought of going to the East, which some

of my compatriots made their scene of activity some time ago with no small measure of success, but the East is too credulous and is inclined too much to poison and the ballet. Its gods are ludicrous. The East still reeks too much of hairy animals. Its lights and shadows are barbarously crude and too bright to make it worth while for a refined artist as I am to go into that crowded, foul circus tent. Ah, my friend, I am so vain that I even begin this Diary not without the secret intention of impressing you with my modesty in the rôle of *seeker* of words and comparisons. I hope you will not take advantage of my frankness and cease believing me.

Are there any other questions? Of the play itself I have no clear idea yet. It will be composed by the same impresario who will assemble the actors—*Fate*. My modest rôle, as a beginning, will be that of a man who so loves his fellow beings that he is willing to give them everything, his soul and his money. Of course, you have not forgotten that I am a billionaire? I have three billion dollars. Sufficient—is it not?—for one spectacular performance. One more detail before I conclude this page.

I have with me, sharing my fate, a certain Irwin Toppi, my secretary,—a most worthy person in his black frock coat and silk top hat, his long nose resembling an unripened pear and his smoothly shaven, pastor-like face. I would not be surprised to find a prayer book in his pocket. My Toppi came upon this earth from *there*, i.e. from Hell and by the same means as mine: he, too, assumed the human form and, it seems, quite successfully—the rogue is entirely immune from seasickness. However to be seasick one must have some brains and my Toppi is unusually stupid—even for this