

# Bourne toWrite...

creative writing  
workshops

## Diabolical Trends

by Garf Collins

The Devil's out of fashion. *A difficult subject for this week's homework*, I thought. Should one develop a story around the demise of the Christian view of hell in medieval times? Then it was said that sins would be repaid beyond death by a visit to Satan himself accompanied by everlasting torture. By contrast, in the secular age now ebbing, as extreme religions resurge, belief in the Devil faded. The message had anyway passed onto emphasising heavenly reward for good behaviour.

Without further inspiration, my mind wandered. Suddenly the sentence 'Courage mon ami! Le Diable est mort' leapt into my mind. If the Devil's dead, he's certainly out of fashion - hence the mental trigger, but where had that originated? I remembered it was from 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' - surprisingly since I must have read the book when I was about 14. That was all I remembered, so I looked up where the quote was from in Charles Reade's novel.

Two men decided to travel together while their routes coincided. Denys, a soldier, was on his way to Burgundy and Gerard who was going to Rome, was escaping pursuit from Holland where he had been forcibly separated from his beloved Margaret. As they were passing through a dense forest, a young bear approached them. Alarmed, Gerard killed it with his axe. Shortly afterwards they were attacked by a giant female bear, maddened by the loss of her cub.

They climbed trees to avoid her, but she pursued Denys up his tree. Gerard shot the bear with his companion's crossbow, and she fell. Enraged, she pursued him up another tree. Denys took a turn with his crossbow and shot the bear again. Gerard fainted.

Luckily his fall from the tree was softened by the bear who had crashed to the ground before him. It was then that Denys said "Courage mon ami. Le diable est mort."

After discovering this link to the topic, I couldn't help reading more about the companion's journey.

At times it seemed a living hell. Along the way, they stayed at very poor inns full of people in all sorts of filth. Their stench was enhanced by the heat of the fire, so Gerard slept in straw as far from them as he could but still in a fetid atmosphere.

When rereading this, I thought that in those days, the Devil of disease certainly wasn't dead and must have been very much in fashion. No social distancing, PPE or vaccines. Every stranger was a vehicle for pestilence or plague, bringing potential early death and an encounter with the Devil waiting for an unprepared soul.

And we think that one month's lockdown against Covid-19 is hell!