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Astonishing Creatures

Leo Tolstoy

1880

There are such creatures who all live off the land, but in order for them to become harder as possible to feed, they divided their land so that only those who are not working on it can use it, but those who work, they cannot use it and suffer and die generations after generations from the inability to feed off the land. Besides, these creatures elect one family or several families out of many and renounce their will and reason for the sake of slavish obedience to everything that the elect ones will want to do to them. And the elect ones happen to be the most evil and stupid of all. But the creatures who elect and submit, praise them in every way. These creatures speak different languages, unintelligible to each other. But instead of trying to eliminate the cause of misunderstanding and discord, they separate themselves even further, in addition to language differences, they divide into different coalitions, called states, and because of these coalitions they kill thousands and thousands of creatures alike themselves, and ravage one another. For more convenient ravaging and killing of each other, these creatures put on identical, special, primarily colorful clothing, invent means of killing of each other and teach the obedient multitude the best ways of killing.

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Original text from RevoltLib.com, 2021. Translated by
EarthlyFireFlies (WikiSource.org user).

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With all of that, these creatures, to explain their meaning of life and its purpose, assure themselves and each other, that there is a creature like them the but only possessing those properties that they would like to have, which therefore is able to do all sorts of follies and nasty things; and they come up with various, uttermost useless to anyone means of pleasing this imaginary creature, and in this pleasing they spend huge share the fruits of their labor, although these fruits are predominantly not enough to feed even themselves. To make sure that this fib has not ceased to deceive children, parents diligently teach their children all the lies about this being, called God, and about how he created the world, how he became a human, how then he gave people his body and then flew onto sky, about what they know that it's untrue, and so on. And not only they require from their children to repeat all of that, but they require the same from other people, and killed and continue to kill hundreds of thousands alike for disagreeing with that.

But it's not enough that they all do all these mean and stupid things, and suffer from them, and know that they suffer precisely from these nasty things and follies, but they not only continue doing them, but they also elect from themselves people who are assigned to come up with such rationale, according to which all the nonsense and dirty tricks are necessary to do, can't not to be done. All these arguments, the most convoluted and confusing to everyone, the least to those who invent them, they call science. And all these justifications for nastiness and stupidity and various, good for nothing, philosophizing are regarded as the most important work, and these theorizing are taught to all children, and all parents and youths themselves consider for the great honor to learn this science.

These creatures get divorced in such a dirty, ugly way that they themselves are ashamed of this incident and not only do not commit it in front of others, but always secretly. Moreover, they commit acts, consequences which — the birth of new such creatures — are not only painful for those creatures, from

womb of whose new, helpless in their early lives, creatures come out, but also these new creatures make lives of those who produce them highly difficult, and become burden to them. In addition, the incessant reproduction of these creatures threatens them with disasters of hunger for all, because their multiplying is happening faster than the production of food for all. These creatures know it and speak about it and, despite of this, are not only acting contrary to their benefits, health, general considerations, but, whenever possible, they not only acclaim but sanctify this disgusting act. Some praise it in disjointed, confusing words, called poetry, others not only praise, but bless this detestable act in the name of that fictional creature they call god.

I will not speak about those millions of non-senses and nasty things committed by these beings: how they poison themselves with toxins, considering it pleasure; how they gather in the most contaminated by themselves places in large numbers, whereas huge spaces of unoccupied land are available, build the buildings of 30 floors in single area; or as not caring about how to better move around for all of them, take care only about how only some of them could ride, fly as soon as possible; or how they put words together is a way so that their endings would be the same, and after putting them together, how they admire this set of words, calling it poetry; or how they collect other words without endings, also stupid and weird words, call them laws and because of these words they, in every way, torment, lock in prisons and kill each other, guided by these laws. Can't even recount everything.

The most remarkable of all is that these creatures not only don't wise up, use their reasoning not to understand what is stupid and bad, but on the contrary, to justify all their own stupidity and nastiness. And not only they do not want to see that these nonsense and nasty things are tormenting them, they don't let anyone among themselves indicate, that don't need to do what they do, and that it's possible and must do some-

thing entirely different and not to suffer as much. As soon as a creature appears among them, who uses his mind, immediately all the rest come in anger, indignation, horror and in any way possible scold, beat such a creature or hang him up on the gallows or on the cross, or burn, or shoot. And, what is stranger than all, is that when they hang, kill this reasonable, among the mad, creature, and it no longer bothers them, they begin to slowly forget what this reasonable creature was talking about, and they start to make up something as if it said, which it never said, and when everything was told by this reasonable being becomes thoroughly forgotten and distorted, that same creatures, who earlier hated and tortured this, one of all, reasonable creature, begin to glorify the crucified and killed, sometimes even thinking of doing this creature a great honor, recognize him as being equal to that imaginary evil and grotesque god whom they revere.

These creatures are astonishing. These creatures are called people.