

PIGS IN A VEGETARIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL.*

A TRUE STORY FOR A NEW ÆSOP.

BY ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

THERE is in Philadelphia a vegetarian church. It was founded at Salford, Manchester, England, in 1809. The first members were largely drawn from the Established Church, and others from the ranks of the Swedenborgians, then a rising sect. Their leader was a certain Mr. Cowherd, who had been a Curate of St. John's Church, (now Manchester Cathedral) under the celebrated John Clowes (pronounced Clōz). Clowes has been immortalized by De Quincey, in the latter's essay on "A Manchester Swedenborgian." The creed of the vegetarian sect was thoroughly "New Church," as may still be seen from the current edition. It differs from Swedenborg only in minor ways, and includes a plank in its platform making abstinence from flesh and wine compulsory.

In 1817 a number of families, led by the Rev. Wm. Metcalfe, came to Philadelphia, where in 1823 they established a church on *Third Street, above Girard Avenue*. At first it was of wood, but in 1845 a substantial brick building was put up. Metcalfe died in 1862, leaving a widow (his second wife) who survived him into the present century. She died at eighty-five with her hair still almost black. She had never tasted fish, flesh or fowl in her life (1819-1904). After the founder's death the church began to languish, and for many years past has made no new converts. Every member who dies makes one less.

* Being in the midst of printing the fourth edition of *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, I have not time to verify the facts and dates here given; but most of them have been fixed in my mind since I was thirty, and I doubt if there is a single flaw. My authorities are: Personal knowledge; White's larger *Life of Swedenborg* (London, 1867); Metcalfe's *Out of the Clouds* (Philadelphia, 1872), presented to me by the author's widow; the *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1885-1904), article "Cowherd"; the old Philadelphia Directories, and other matter at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

In 1890 there was an agitation to move. The neighborhood, which was in the fields in 1817, was now crowded, and, worse than that, a sausage-mill had been built next door, and the steam from the engine was discoloring the tombstones. But how could the members move? The only bidder for their property was the pork butcher, and to him they could not sell. At last, however, the estate was put into the hands of an agent, and their consciences were clear. But the agent was not a vegetarian, and promptly sold out to the pork butcher. Then came the nemesis of fate: upon the very spot where a vegetarian church and Sunday school had been established for so many decades there were hams piled up to the ceiling! On Easter Sunday, 1891, the church was opened at its present location on Park Avenue, where it stands back to back with Conwell's Baptist Temple. When it was down at the original site I was a frequent attender (1887-1890), and have seen many members pass away. The present Pastor, Rev. Henry S. Clubb, is an octogenarian of original character and varied experience. A journalist under Horace Greeley, a quartermaster in the Civil War, wherein he was wounded at the battle of Corinth, the founder of a vegetarian magazine (*Food, Home and Garden*), and the promoter of all sorts of new experiments in diet, Mr. Clubb is one of the picturesque figures of our city.

On Christmas Eve, 1907, being troubled with loss of sleep due to city noises, I secured a home with a Quaker family on Corinthian Avenue. This street is perhaps the only one in Philadelphia which fulfils the artistic requirement that its axis points at a fine building. This is Girard College, whose Corinthian columns doubtless give the street its name. My Quaker friends being quiet and affectionate people, I settled down to have some genuine rest at last. Too well do I know what Shakespeare means by Macbeth murdering sleep. Alas! I soon discovered that this stately avenue, being free from street railways, was the regular thoroughfare for cattle being driven at midnight to the slaughter-house! Many a time have I been awakened by the cracking of whips, the shouts of brutal men, and the panting of distressed beasts under my windows. Last night it reached the climax. Among a herd of swine, which took at least ten minutes to pass, one pig broke its leg close to where I lay. Our household was soon awakened by its dismal yells. The victim was evidently middle-aged, for they were too hoarse to be called squeals. At the breakfast table we exchanged impressions, and one of the company informed us that the pigs were *on their way to a slaughter-house on Third Street above Girard Avenue!*

“Ah!” said I pensively, “pigs on their way to the vegetarian Sunday school.”

Every word of this story is literally true. Even Mark Twain could not invent anything funnier than facts. Indeed, it often seems to me that the world itself is a huge Rabelaisian joke.

MORAL.—ON THE PHYSICAL PLANE, THE DEVIL IS STRONGER THAN GOD.