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ON THE

SUBJECT OF RELIGION.

BY AN OUTSIDER.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

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THE THEOPHAGHI, OR GOD-EATERS.

CHAPTER I.

I wander and fall asleep—and dream, and what I dreamt.

IT was a glorious August afternoon; I had strolled a long distance, and found myself on the brow of a hill whence seven counties could be seen. Here King JOHN had feasted—the mean, cowardly tyrant, false alike to his generous brother, his lion-hearted sovereign; to his noble barons, and to his faithful people. The old Roman road, leading to Foss-gate and further on to *S^tchester*, was before me. Below, to the right, was a beautiful trim rectory, embosomed in trees and flowers, and still further down in the valley rose a neat but small church, whence the bells for evening service were first beginning to toll: the day was sultry, the grass inviting; the dense shade of the noble trees which occupy the site of King JOHN's old palace, now called Cottington Hill, arrested me: I laid me down and slept—and dreamt.

Methought I had travelled into a far-distant land, which I had often, while waking, wished to visit—the land of the God-eaters. It is a curious idea; but time, and place, and education, reconcile one to anything: and this highly-gifted and civilized people had been taught from their infancy that it was most important for them, at stated intervals, to eat a little bit of the god they worshipped. This they firmly believed; and did, or fancied they did, once a month, or as often as they thought good and sufficient to secure their welfare. I suppose the chimes of the village church mingled with my former thoughts in my dream. I imagined that a public worship was about to commence in the strange land I was visiting, and I felt an irresistible inclination to approach and see the rites and ceremonies practised by this people. I entered the building, and found the inside neat and well attended; a handsome venerable man sat near a table at the further end of the apartment, and I was told that at that table the God-eaters partook of their monthly repast; I was shewn to a seat, and very soon the ceremonies began. It was the 10th of the month, and the first passage which struck me was a hymn, which purported to have been written by the king of a people long ago dispersed, but who occupied, for many centuries, a small barren tract in the East, and whose utterances, curiously enough, are still adopted and cherished by this and all the nations bordering on the land of the God-eaters. The language of this hymn appeared to me most beautiful, it accorded most fully with the religion which I myself professed; for, though not considered very orthodox in my own country, I feel convinced that I thoroughly understand the true doctrine that was taught by the sublime founder of our religion.

I consider true Christianity to be essentially a religion of self-sacrifice, and that it differs chiefly from all religions which have preceded, or been cotemporaneous, or succeeded it, in that it maintains that no sacrifice is acceptable to GOD except self-

sacrifice—the sacrifice of one's own evil passions; and not only that, but of one's own harmless whims, fancies, or desires, when the exigencies or welfare of our neighbour, our relation, or the community in which we live, demands it; while all other religions have inculcated the sacrifice of something else—riches, cattle, fruits, sons, daughters, and such like.

The august founder of our religion showed us this bright example, and hesitated not to sacrifice himself, to offer himself up a victim nailed to the cross, to accomplish that benevolent purpose for which he was sent on earth. And the Roman is not far wrong when he places always before the eyes of the multitude an effigy representing the human form, with all its weaknesses and passions, nailed to the cross, IN SELF-DENIAL.

The ancients imagined that they might do all sorts of wickedness, and yet appease God by offering up sacrifices of bullocks, goats, and animals of various descriptions. The Romans, the Greeks, the Carthagenians, and the Egyptians, thought so; and the Jews, that nation who claim to be specially directed by the Deity, appear to have reasoned after the same manner. But this king, or the author of the song whoever he may have been, was more enlightened, reproved them, and put into the mouth of his God the words: “Thinkest thou that
 “I will eat bull's flesh, and drink the blood of goats. I will
 “take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goat out of thy
 “folds; for all the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the
 “cattle upon a thousand hills. Whereas thou hatest to be
 “reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee; and when
 “thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst unto him; thou satest
 “and spakest against thy brother, yea, and hast slandered thine
 “own mother's son: these things hast thou done; but I held
 “my tongue, and thou thoughtest wickedly, that I am even such
 “a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set before thee
 “the things thou hast done. O, consider this, ye that forget God;
 “lest I pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.” And

the repentant sinner is made to answer: "Have mercy upon me, O, GOD, after thy great goodness; wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me. Lo! thou requirest truth in the inward parts: Make me a clean heart, O, GOD, for thou desirest no meat sacrifice, else would I give it thee. Thou delightest not in burnt offerings; the sacrifice fit for GOD is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O, GOD, shalt thou not despise."

Such were the sentiments of the bard whose hymn we had just heard. He felt assured that the god he worshipped was only to be pleased BY GOOD WORKS, by the sacrifice of the will, by the practice of the divine law, "Do unto thy neighbour as thou wouldest should be done unto thyself." He had no idea of drawing a distinction between faith and good works, and of preferring the one to the other; or of those curious doctrines which, if carried out to their logical conclusion, would lead men to suppose that it were better to lead a life of great wickedness, in order to create a great joy in heaven over a death-bed repentance. He knew that his god was not such a one as himself, open to temptation, and prone to succumb to it.

The hymn being read, further prayers were commenced; and I imagined, in my dream, that I had an unseen companion. The recollection I have, conveys to me a faint idea of how I received my information. I cannot call to my mind that I saw any one, but it seemed as if a voice from above was ever supplying a commentary on what was passing before me. My informant proceeded to tell me that the eastern nation which had written those songs believed not in one single god, but considered the heavens as peopled with an infinity of god-heads; that at the creation these gods assembled together, and jointly, *even as one*, created the heaven and the earth; that the ancestors of the God-eaters had long ago made a translation of the ancient

history of that Asiatic race, but had, by a pious fraud, mistranslated it, in order to make matters more pleasant to the people; that the original Hebrew was "Elohim," the plural of "El" *—God, and the verb "made" was in the singular, signifying that the act of the many was, as it were, the single act of a single god-head; that they acted in thorough unison. So they wrote that the gods, as one, or unanimously, created the heaven and earth; but the pious translators substituted: "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth."

The voice continued: That the Jews imagined that after the creation, the gods, who had thus far acted as one, separated, and ruled over separate regions and nations; that one set presided over Chaldœa, another over Egypt, and one was the God of Israel; that the name of this God was Yehooya,† and the Jews thought they were the chosen of Yehooya, and that he was a very powerful god. That while they depicted themselves a most stubborn and wicked nation, treacherous and libidinous to an extreme, they represented their god, Yehooya, more as a malevolent spirit than a good one. He was jealous of any attention shown to any other gods but himself; and that this was the explanation of the meaning of the eighth verse of the hymn we had just read: "I will not reprove thee because of thy sacrifices and burnt offerings, which were not made at *my* altar," meaning that the Jews had sacrificed and worshipped other gods.

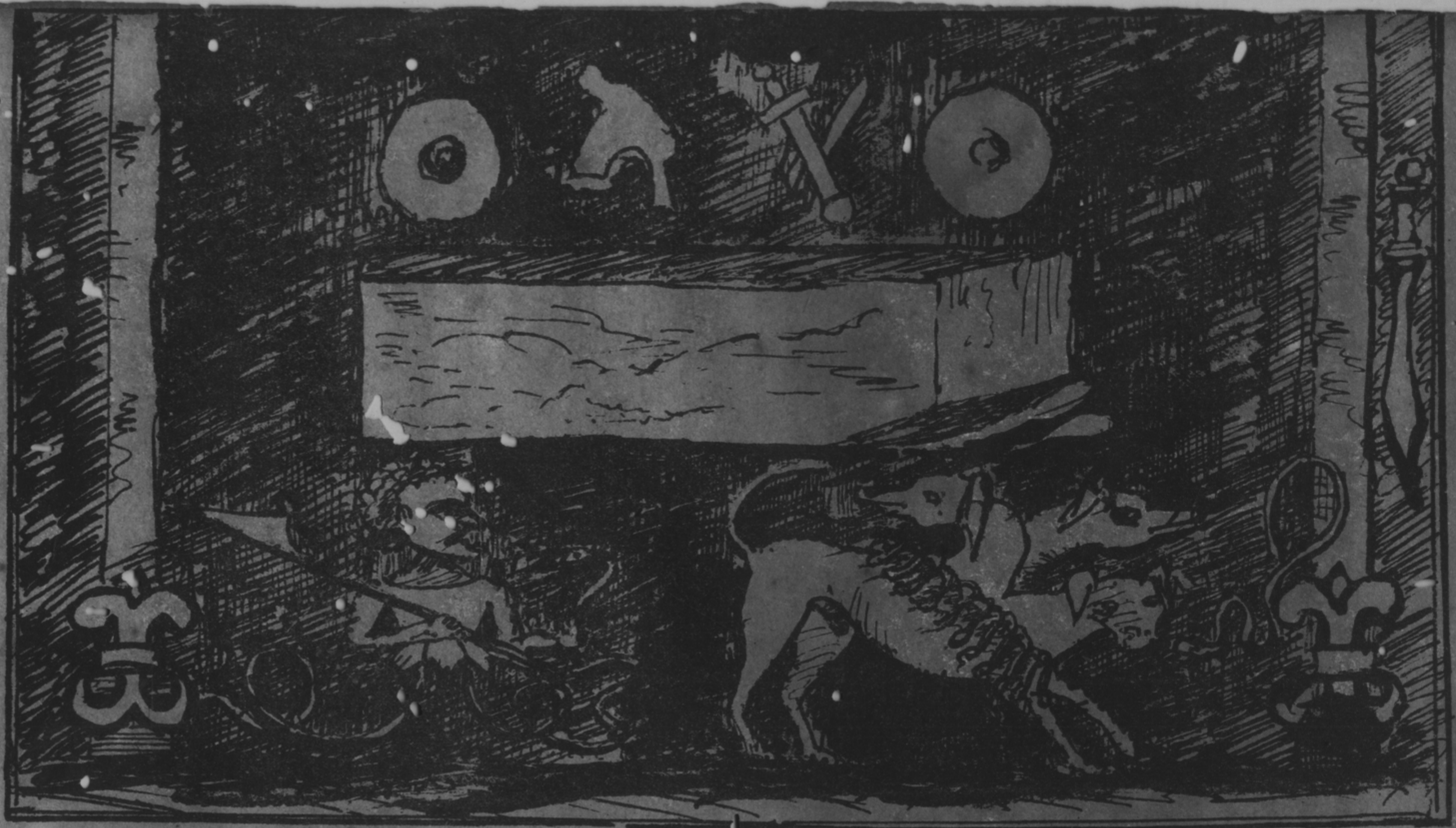
* "Eli, Eli, lama sabakht^h ^{ai}," "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Again, in the names Samuel, Emmanuel, &c., which are similar to Abdoollah, Uz^hutoollah; and among Mahometans Allah, the name given to God in the Koran, is merely the combination of the Arabic article "Al," preserved to us in Alchemy, Algebra, and "Ila," signifying a god, a deity. Thus Allah must be held originally to have meant, the God, or, our God.

† This word Yehooya, or Jehovah, is pronounced at present by the Jews, "Ayhighyay," and signifies, "I was, I am, I shall be"—in other words, "The Eternal," or "Kronos," Time, the master of everything; "Malik," King, in Arabic and Persian; "Molech" in Carthaginian, as handed down to us by the Romans.

That they invested this god with every human passion and weakness; they flattered, coaxed, and cajoled* him; they thought him so angered with any nation which did not worship him, that he not only permitted, but commanded those who did worship him to slay and destroy all the brave defenders of their homes and hearths, when unable to resist superior numbers; to massacre women and children in cold blood (Numbers, chap. xxxi. v. 15-18)—just as the women and children were massacred at Cawnpore, in the Indian rebellion—and to bring out the kings taken in war, and hew them in pieces, while they exclaimed, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” They thought him capable of repenting of a just judgment, as in the case of DAVID, the royal poet; and of stopping the motion of the earth, in order to prolong the day, and gratify the Israelites by the long-continued slaughter of their enemies.

The voice continued: This pious fraud of substituting the word God, or the Lord, for Jehovah, or Yehooya, was continued throughout the translation; and is nowhere more apparent than where Moses and Aaron are described as going to Pharoah, and saying to him: “Thus saith Yehooya, the God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharoah said: Who is Yehooya, that I should obey his voice, and let Israel go? I know not Yehooya, and will not let Israel go.” Further, that Yehooya was delighted with burnt offerings of every kind; that the Israelites even offered their children on his altar. Thus Abraham was a man after Yehooya’s own heart, because he refused not to sacrifice his only son, as a burnt offering, on his altar. Jephtha, also, immolated his daughter to this spirit, in

* Deuteronomy, chap. ix., v. 27-28: “Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: Look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin, lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say: Because Yehooya was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.”



Tomb of the *MATVNAS* Family at Cervetri. (Cære vetus)
the bas relief represents Time toothless, without end and without beginning.

fulfilment of a vow made to him. He, in this particular, resembled the God of the Carthagenians, Moloch, which is, in fact, merely the Arabic or Semitic word "Malek," ruler; Time, the ruler of all things—old Chronos, of the Greeks; Saturn, of the Romans; whose worship was even antecedent to that of Zeus, Jupiter; and who is therefore represented as having devoured all his children, except one—Jupiter; namely, the god who was still worshipped when that allegory was invented. Time was the first Trinity of which we have any record. The Etrurians worshipped him, as well as the Carthagenians and the Chinese; and in the old Etrurian tomb, at Ceryetri, between Rome and Civita Vecchia, he is represented as a king, attended by his three-headed dog Cerberus, with one head looking back to the past, one looking down to the present, and the third looking forward to the future; but in the time of the Greeks and Romans (as was the wont of those days) deposed god-heads were relegated to the lower regions, and Cerberus became the guardian of the gates of Hades,* or the shades below.

The next thing that attracted my attention was the Belief, or Credence, wherein is condensed all that the people were expected and required to believe. And the voice whispered: Compare this with the articles which contain that which, by the law of this people, all the priesthood must subscribe to. And I read: Article 1st. There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker, and preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And I said to the voice: surely this is not Yehooya, the God of Israel and of battles, who is depicted with every human passion; and if

* In like manner, Bogie, once a respectable member of the Northern Mythology, has been converted into a mischievous imp, wherewith to frighten children; and the word *daimon*, daimone, which signified a god, a deity, in Greek, has been in our own time turned into "a demon," or malevolent spirit. Also Menu, or Minos, once worshipped like Confucius as a divine law-giver, was relegated to judge the dead in the lower regions.

he has no body, and no parts, how can the son sit on his father's *right hand*; or how can the part of a whole, *which is without body*, have had a human body for 1,800 years? And the voice answered: Be silent and observe; there are many inexplicable mysteries in the religion of this god-eating nation.

The next passage which struck me was this beautiful prayer: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy holy spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen." And as I looked upwards I said: Is not this prayer sufficient for the whole worship of the God of infinite power, goodness, and wisdom? Why weary him with vain repetitions? Does not that glorious song tell us that the true worship of him consists in the performance of good works, and not in lip service? And the voice repeated: Be silent and attentive; the religion of every nation should be respected; each has its peculiarities, its excellencies, and its faults. Even thine own, dost thou fancy it perfection, or dost thou admit that it is merely a yearning after the truth, known only to that omnipotent Being, whose excellence is so great, whose goodness is so inexpressible, and whose glory is too glorious even to dazzle mortal eyes? This prayer which thou hast just heard read is the beginning of the worship which ushers in the public eating of the god whom this nation adores, a rite which appears to you so strange, and which it is your great desire to witness and observe. This ceremony* will, however, not take place to-day, but on the

* This word Ceremony is supposed to be derived from the old Etruscan, or Pelagian town, Cœre, whither the Vestal Virgins fled with the sacred fire when Rome was attacked by the Gauls. The Romans, who were, up to that time, fire-worshippers, were then instructed in the Etrurian religion and rites; hence they called the new observances ceremonies. The tomb here delineated was discovered near that town, its present name being Cervetri, or Cœretus. Its Pelagian name was Agylla, being one of the old Saturnian cities, the names of which all begin with A or L, denoting Semitic origin by the prefix article Al, as Arfino, Agylla, Laiceia, Laurentium; and as in the present day Al kahir, or Cairo, in Egypt, and Alhambra, in Spain.

next fast-day: to-day, the venerable old man whom you have remarked sitting by the table, will deliver a discourse concerning that rite, exhorting all true observers of the religion of this land to attend and participate therein. Listen to him attentively; and take down his words as they fall, for they are worthy, as the minister is earnest and sincere; and they will explain to you thoroughly the light in which this people view this, to them, most important ceremony of their religion; and, before the oration commences, I will explain to you how this matter first arose. So while the oboe led the quavering voices of the choir, the small still voice continued.

CHAPTER II.

As I dream, the origin of the ceremony of God-eating, and the religion of the God-eaters, is explained to me.

In former days, and in the country where this religion sprung, the people were primitive and simple in their ways and habits. The climate was not extreme as it is here; and people, instead of employing tailors, even walked about publicly in seamless garments.* The women rose early, and sat down in twos to grind the corn required for the day's consumption of their family; whence arises the saying: "Of two women who sit at the same mill, one shall be taken and the other left." People occasionally satisfied their hunger by rubbing the ears of corn with their hands as they passed through the corn fields: and instead of sleeping in a four-post bed, encircled with curtains, and further protected with glazed windows, they slept under

*Many of the Hindoos to the present day dress in seamless garments, in long strips of woven material; one of which is wound, like the Scotch plaid, round the upper part of the body; and the other is wrapped round the loins, hanging down to the knees; with one end passed tight between the legs so as to loop it up, and form a pair of extemporary trousers.

porticos, and on the flat roofs of the houses, exposed to all the changes of the atmosphere, on light settles; which they could put—bed, bedding, and all—on their heads, and carry away.

Amidst such manners, and in such a climate, among a set of men poor in the world's wealth, (a set of fishermen) rose the religion which these "God-eaters" profess. They all habitually ate together, even among sinners and publicans; and occasionally a few loaves and fishes were made to satisfy a multitude. They needed not plates, and knives and forks, and chairs and tables, and spoons of different sizes; but they sat them down even in the desert, and, having satisfied their hunger, returned content. It was there that the founder of this religion; knowing, by prophetic foresight, that his end ~~by~~ a cruel death was nigh at hand, enjoined on his disciples, that, come what might, they never would relinquish the practice of eating their meals together. **All the males** were to eat together at one common table. This he impressed on them, and enjoined in the figurative language of the East, meaning that in this would be found the strength and preservation of his doctrines, the backbone of the new faith, according to which every man was to be considered as a brother, a neighbour, and an equal. This, he said is "my blood," and this is "my body," even as I go forth from among you, nailed to the cross. And for a long time this observance was faithfully maintained, and in many of the primitive Christian societies there existed such a fraternization that they had even a community of goods; hence the story of Ananias and Sapphira: and the pagans among whom they lived, not understanding their ways, affirmed that there was no marriage among them, but a community of women likewise.

But, gradually, as the religion gained strength among other people, and in other climates, this practice was found to be attended with so many inconveniences, that it fell into much disuse. Then, in order that some observance of this, so solemnly

enjoined, custom should be maintained, the elders of the congregations determined that, at stated intervals, when the people should have assembled for the worship of their creator, all should dine together; and this practice was kept up for many years; and the keeping up of the ceremony was found to be of the utmost importance to the safety of the Christian community during times of trouble and persecution; inasmuch that as many of the pagans objected to eat out of the same dish with whomsoever might sit next to them in equality of brotherhood, it became a means of distinguishing the thorough-going Christian from the lukewarm, the hesitating, and the impostor.

But, as time worked on, and the Roman emperor himself professed Christianity, the observance of even this rite was found to be inconvenient, impracticable, and unsuited to the altered times; so each person is now served with a modicum of bread, and a sip of wine out of the common cup, in token of the brotherly equality and fraternization of every member of the Christian community; and the denunciations which are uttered against such who should unworthily partake of the bread and wine, were originally intended to deter scoffers, or others who did not really, and wholly believe, and practise Christianity, from joining in the ceremony.

And gradually troublous times arose. The great Roman empire fell to pieces; and, in its decay, the highways were abandoned and went to ruin; commerce and social intercourse between nation and nation languished; the religion of the God-eaters disappeared from the countries in which it had originated, and took root in the west, where it sprung up in matured growth. The people who had to interpret the old writings spoke another language, and had totally different ideas and modes of expressing themselves. They were chiefly ascetic monks, who thought they were following out the precepts of their master by renouncing, not merely the enjoyments, but the duties of this world; and led a life of self-denial

and self-inflicted torture and penance; forgetful that the best part of the religion they professed was to do good unto all men. Such people had to interpret the figurative language of the east; and, not understanding it, maintained that blood was blood, and nothing else; and that wine meant wine, and body body. Then arose differences between the interpreters, and, as even ascetic monks have passions, they got angry, and, heated by argument, "dealt damnation through the world," and even caught and burnt alive* in the flames those who slightly differed from them in opinion; and when they could not catch them, devoted them to eternal tortures in the next world!

Thus began the corruption of the religion which preached peace and goodwill among mankind, and good works, and self-denial; and as the expounders of the religion became more and more possessed of worldly goods, and liked to enjoy them; they found it inconvenient to preach to the people a doctrine which they neither followed nor intended to follow; they endeavoured to explain away the real meaning of the various passages in their sacred books, and substitute other meanings. And now things have come to such a pitch, that many of the people here assembled believe that it is wicked to do good works, trusting that God shall judge you accordingly; but that it is good to cherish a certain something, they call faith.

Hark to the words now being uttered by the preacher: "I speak not of the professed scoffer, the infidel, the criminal; I speak of those who believe themselves to be good Christians, who regularly attend the services of prayer and thanksgiving in the house of God, nay, duly approach the LORD'S table, and avail themselves of the great privilege of God-eating, in His body and blood; people to whom all the externals of religion are precious; who would shrink from any breach of the moral law, or any exhibition of unseemly passion; perhaps, good fathers, good

“citizens, upright in all their dealings, mindful of the poor, the
 “needy, and the afflicted. Such people are, indeed, branches of
 “our visible church on earth; but I tell you that, nevertheless,
 “they *may* be—alas! my brethren, too often they actually are—
 “only *fruitless* branches; and our LORD tells us that all such
 “shall be cut off, and flung away to destruction. What an
 “awful thought! after a life of self-delusion to find one’s self
 “at the resurrection severed from all the blessed saints of
 “heaven; to hear the fearful words, “Depart from me,” uttered
 “by him in whose presence alone is the fulness of joy for ever-
 “more! Does it not urge upon every one of us the important
 “question: Are we ourselves so sure that we shall be reckoned
 “among the *fruitful* branches? Or if not, how may we secure
 “to ourselves that blessed, that inestimable privilege? My
 “brethren, do not deceive yourselves. There is one way, and
 “only one—not the easy and palpable way of pious professions,
 “or even pious actions, for broad is the road and wide is the
 “gate that leadeth to destruction, but straight is the gate and
 “narrow is the way that leadeth to eternal life. That narrow way,
 “my friends, trodden by so few among us, that straight gate over-
 “looked by so many, even of these who seek the true path, what
 “are they but faith in our LORD? Ah! my hearers, would that
 “I could impress deeply on all your hearts this solemn truth,
 “by faith alone can you render yourselves fruitful branches of
 “the great eternal vine. Let us have faith; and again I say,
 “let us have faith above all things. If ye have faith, your
 “heavenly father will hear and grant your prayers. If ye have
 “faith, your good works shall be reckoned unto you for
 “righteousness. If ye have faith, your sins shall be forgiven
 “ye, through the sacrifice and mediation of our blessed LORD
 “and SAVIOUR. Here is the true test and touchstone of our
 “spiritual condition: if we have faith, then shall we be found
 “among those fruitful branches that the great husbandman doth

“only purge and prune, in order they should bring forth
“more fruits unto salvation.”

And, said I, bewildered, what is this faith? How is it shown? In what does it consist? It consists, said the voice, in low, sad accents; it consists in shutting one's eyes and ears, abandoning the conclusions which the reasoning powers granted to us by the deity, for our guidance in all other matters, teach us, and believing everything which may be taught by a minister of their religion. Mind, I do not mean, by every minister of this God-eating religion. No; there are many adjoining countries where they eat a little bit of their god, just as people do here. But they differ in various small matters: they do not have a deal table under the table-cloth, but they make it of stone, and fix it so that it cannot be moved; and they put candles on it, which these people never do, and to which they object very much. So there is a great schism between the God-eaters who eat their god on a stone table, and those who consider that sinful, and will only eat him on a deal table; and though these matters may appear trivial to you and me, yet here they are thought much of, and of most vital importance! Listen to the preacher. And at that moment the old man's sonorous voice rose with extatic fervour, as he thanked his GOD that he and his hearers had not been made like unto those sinners who eat their god on a stone table, with idolatrous candles, to mock the sun's glorious sunshine.

And the voice continued: Be silent, and wonder not at any thing you see, for within fifty miles of where you now stand have the two sects of God-eaters fought for supremacy, and as each got the upper hand, they seized on the most venerable and learned of the other party, and roasted them alive.

Oh, God! I exclaimed, surely there must have been other differences? Yes, said the voice, there were other differences, but none of greater importance than the stone table. These people here believe that their god is so like a king, that it is

improper to approach him directly, and they believe that the intercession of the founder of their religion is necessary before any prayer can be granted. The other God-eaters believe that their god is not only approachable through the intercession of one solitary individual; who, as being part of the same one god, they rather object to look upon as an interceder; because they say that it does not appear rational to divide god into two, and put one part on a throne and the other as a suppliant, interceding for lower suppliants; so they have invented other persons, messengers, and holy men and women, whom they believe, through their good actions in this world, to have acquired the privilege of standing before the Almighty through countless ages, and interceding with him in favour of any who have propitiated them by worshipping in their chapels on earth, and have sufficiently paid the priests who officiate therein. Moreover, those other God-eaters think it right to hang up in their houses of worship pictures representing the good actions of those holy persons; and to carve representations of them in wood, or stone, or plaster, and to place them inside and outside their churches: whereas these people object altogether to their being placed inside, though they do not think it wrong to put them outside. Then, again, these people object to the figure of the crucifix being put about their churches, inside or outside; whereas the others delight in seeing and kissing the symbol of self-denial; which represents the human body, with all its wants and passions, nailed helplessly to the wooden instrument of torture; on which it is believed, by both sects, that the founder of their religion was exposed and died during the sway and rule of the Romans. But now I have told you all the differences except one, and that is one which few people exactly understand, and which is differently thought of and differently explained by different preachers; but the gist of the matter is, that these people, though they believe that they eat the body and drink the blood of their god; yet do so with a kind of mental reserva-

tion, that there is something figurative in it : whereas the others boldly maintain that the change is complete, and that in the act of eating the bread and drinking the wine, these actually become flesh and blood, through God's omnipotent power. But this distinction, with a scarce perceptible difference, caused in former days more ill-feeling and bloodshed between the two sects, than does at the present day, in this land, the stone immovable table and the candles !

Here my mentor paused ; and again the fine old man's sonorous voice rose in exhortation. I had thought him handsome before, but now, under the excitement of uttering words, which he evidently seemed to think were streaming to him from on high, and, through him, to the people around, his face was lit up with an almost heavenly expression of benevolent intelligence ; and as his manly voice rung forth in measured accents through the arched aisles, methought that if any one could impart enthusiasm to his hearers, this was the very man. He had finished the first part of his discourse, and before laying down his book, wished to remind the congregation that at the next meeting, the ceremony of eating a little bit of their god would take place ; and he continued as follows :

“ This day the usual notice has been given for the celebration
 “ at our next meeting of the Holy-Communion of the body and
 “ blood of our God. Our teacher himself hath told us that par-
 “ ticipation in this solemn ordinance of his religion is absolutely
 “ necessary to eternal life, and has left it as his dying injunction
 “ and command : “ Do this in remembrance of me.” Thus are
 “ we taught the necessity, and thus are we commanded to perform
 “ an action of spiritual advantage.

“ We would endeavour to impress upon every one the absolute
 “ necessity of this duty, in order to afford due sustenance to his
 “ soul : John vi., 51, “ I am the living bread which came down
 “ from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for
 “ ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will

“ give for the life of the world.” From which it would appear
 “ that he alone is our support for eternal life ; that a participation
 “ in him, and the redemption through his death in our flesh, is
 “ necessary to secure eternal life ; that we must have intimate
 “ communion with him, expressed in the imagery of eating his
 “ flesh, in order to that participation ; and that it is only by a
 “ vital interest in the benefits of his death and passion, endured
 “ for the salvation of the world, that the soul can be strengthened
 “ for everlasting life. There is, therefore, a connexion necessary
 “ to be established between his death and the soul, in order to its
 “ deriving proper nourishment from him. This connexion, in one
 “ sense, may be gained from believing in him, accepting his
 “ doctrine, and becoming his disciple. But as these points are
 “ matters, in some degree, of hidden, because of internal per-
 “ ception, so also our LORD has left some outward ordinances and
 “ visible rites by which at once we may demonstrate ourselves as
 “ in connexion with him, and at the same time, by virtue of his
 “ promise, derive from them the inward and spiritual nourishment
 “ which he affords to the soul. Such is the sacrament of the
 “ partaking of the body and blood of our LORD ; and to this may
 “ the language of our text be justly applied—“ The bread that I
 “ will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”
 “ For while the true food of the soul, and its nourishment for
 “ eternal life, is our LORD and his cross, still, in a secondary sense,
 “ the imparting of the benefits of his death and passion is derived
 “ to the soul of the recipient from this Holy Communion ; and
 “ therefore in this spiritual sense our teacher may speak, “ The
 “ bread I will give is my flesh.” For at the institution of the
 • “ sacrament he speaks a similar language: He took bread and
 “ gave thanks, and brake it and gave it them, saying: “ This
 “ is my body, which is given for you.” And again, in one of his
 “ most memorable discourses: “ Verily, verily, I say unto you,
 “ unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
 “ ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh

“ my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the
“ last day.”

“ The inference from this must be obvious, namely, the
“ necessity all are under to frequent the LORD’S table ; that
“ unless they do so, they lose one chief means of communion with
“ him, and thereby cut themselves off from partaking of that grace
“ by which alone they can live and grow in all that is needful
“ for the kingdom of Heaven.

• “ In this sense the Holy Communion is a sacrifice of praise
“ and thanksgiving, obligations always due from the creature to
“ the Creator ; but more especially from those who know from what
“ they have been redeemed — sin, misery, and hell ; and who
“ acknowledge the great cost at which they have been redeemed,
“ even by the precious death and blood-shedding of the incarnate
“ Son of God, most High.”

“ And, the conclusion is not too strong, that unless we
“ partake we have no spiritual life abiding in us. This, indeed,
“ makes the too common neglect of the LORD’S Supper a very
“ awful sin. It involves a neglect of ourselves and our soul’s
“ health, as well as contempt of GOD and his prophet ; which
“ appears almost madness. And, though this habitual fault may
“ seem but a slight one now, how will it exhibit itself in the
“ spiritual world hereafter. The soul that has existed without
“ communion with him, in this world, must expect to be thrust
“ out from his presence forever, in the world to come. The pre-
“ paration is in each one’s power, through divine grace ;— sincere
“ repentance to the forsaking of sin ; honest resolutions of amend-
“ ment of life ; a lively faith in GOD’S mercy, with a thankful
“ remembrance of his love, in dying to save sinners, and peace
“ with all mankind, are duties in the compass of every well-
“ disposed heart. He who will not endeavour to complete them is
“ as little prepared to meet the day of judgment as to join in this
“ blessed ordinance ; while he who properly complies with the
“ invitation to the LORD’S table may more than hope to be blessed
“ and forwarded in his way towards everlasting salvation.”

CHAPTER III.

*I fail to comprehend the mysteries of the God-eaters. A tumult,
and how I escaped from their hands.*

THERE was a pause. The sonorous voice of the earnest preacher ceased to resound along the vaulted roof; and I said to my unseen companion: This may be very comprehensible to these God-eaters, but I cannot see any connexion between the doctrines here set forth and those in which I feel my own heart-strings bound up. Those of the song of joy: "Make me
" a clean heart, O GOD, and renew a right spirit within me; for
" thou delightest not in burnt offerings. Thou desirest not such
" sacrifice, else would I give it thee. The sacrifice of GOD is a
" troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O, God, thou
" wilt not despise. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness,
" and cleanse me from my sin; then shall I acknowledge my
" faults, and my sin be ever before me."

And the voice replied: "Even so. We can see plainly that there is little connexion between the two; but so it has been in every time and every clime. Even as the old law-giver, Menu, or Minos, who was first deified and worshipped, and then relegated to the shades below to judge the dead, first, within historic record, enunciated in the far East that divine principle, "Do unto
" others as ye would should be done unto you. Sacrifice so
" much of your own desires as interfere with the rights of others,
" for that alone is the sacrifice demanded by him who made thee
" and thy neighbour likewise," the ministers of religion have always allowed this true principle to disappear amidst a human chaos: if they were needy, they disliked to tell their avaricious

patron that he dealt unfairly by his poor clients, that he neglected the poor, or truckled to the men in authority over him; but they advised his founding a temple, endowing it with sinecure emoluments, riches all of which went to themselves or their brethren; or they recommended his constantly repeating the praise of the Almighty Creator, and humbling himself with words like these: "We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O, LORD! O, God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners;" as if those who repeat these words, and do so without the slightest idea of reforming themselves, or of altering their line of conduct to others, and leave the place of worship with as much self-satisfaction and confidence as when they entered it, were in the least degree benefitted by repeating them. Yet such has been inculcated by the ministers of religion ever since the record of history commences, and amongst Hindoos, Mahometans, and Tartars, they do even as these God-eaters. Indeed, in Thibet and Tartary, where those monastic establishments, common among other sects of the God-eaters, were first introduced, and where the device of making a distinction between faith and good works was first enunciated* as a doctrine, they have gone a step further, and instead of making the people mechanically repeat the words, "miserable sinner," and the like, they print the prayers, and attach them to a small wheel.

Thus, when any one wishes to say his prayers, while bathing, or washing, or pursuing the ordinary avocations of life, he sticks the wooden spike on which his prayer-book is wound (papyrus fashion) into the bank, so that the wheel touches the stream, and as often as it is forced round by the impulse of the running water, so often does he consider that he has prayed and humbled himself before his god.

* See Cockburn Thomson's Translation of the Bhagavad Gita, printed and published by Stephen Austin, Hertford, 1855, chapters 4, 6, 8, 9, and 17. In a note to chapter 4, page 35, faith is defined to be, "The absence of all doubt and scepticism, confidence in the revelation of religion, and unmurmuring performance of its ordinances."

See how the ministers of him who preached love and good-will towards all mankind pursue a course diametrically opposed to it. And methought, as I looked at the book before me, that it opened at a leaf marked, "*COMMINATION: To be read whenever the ordinary may appoint;*" and there I saw the beautiful words of the song, which I had so much admired, placed in juxtaposition with these awful and sinful phrases: The priest shall say, "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, and taketh man for his defence, and in his heart goeth from the LORD. Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. Cursed is the man that maketh any carved or molten image, to worship it. And the people shall answer and say, Amen." And, lifting my face towards heaven, I said: How can this be? Perchance the king of this God-eating nation shall repeat these words, and yet he holds under his sway millions, nay hundreds of millions of subjects who do make carved and molten images, and worship them. Say, shall he curse those millions whom he has sworn to protect and to govern and rule justly, and according to law! Surely the great in this God-eater's land must be blind, not to see the wickedness of making their king to curse those whom he should love and cherish; and what is the harm of thinking a piece of wood, or stone, or metal; or even the sun, a representative or emblem of that power whose brightness human eye could not endure, nor has mortal eye ever seen; provided that it does not cause us to transgress our duty towards man and towards God? and who dare deny that the man who has never done unto his neighbour aught but what was good and befitting, has not therein fulfilled also his duty towards his God. And the voice replied: No; in truth it is a fact that the God-eaters, who do not worship idols, are not one whit more moral than their neighbours who do worship them; nor are the God-eaters who place idols in their temples, and eat, or fancy they eat a bit of their god, more moral than those nations who worship idols, and would consider it a sin, a blasphemy, and an abomination to eat, or to think

that they could eat the flesh of their god, or drink of his blood. Religion appears to have little influence on the amount of crime committed in any part of the world, while the necessities of food, raiment, and climate influence it greatly; but in truth the working of ministers of religion does appear clearly appreciable, when they direct their attention to those classes of society which, from their poverty and wants, are more beset by temptation: but where, as here, the priesthood is encouraged to set itself above the laity, and to think that their calling is mainly to reprove the nobles of the land, they are found to neglect altogether their chief and sacred duty of leading the poor out of temptation, or furnishing them with the weapons of defence against it; *and when weighed in the balance, they will assuredly be found wanting.*

And the voice continued: Again, where the ministers of religion have become rich, they affect the ways and manners of nobles; they live in palaces, dress in purple and fine linen, and, sitting on thrones and in high places, wholly ignore the rights of their poorer brethren, whom they allow to starve on a pittance which a menial servant would disdain to receive as a fair reward for his services. Moreover, they assert that all these things are right, becoming, and essential for the interests of their religion. They talk of maintaining the proper dignity of their station, as ministers of the Divine Creator; apparently forgetful that this great Being is said by themselves to be so condescending that not even a sparrow escapes his care, nay, that the very hairs of our head are borne in remembrance by him; forgetful also that the great teacher whom they reverence was, at his birth, laid in a manger, presented to the world as the son of a carpenter, associated throughout life with fishermen working for their livelihood, and belonged to the class who "have not where to lay their head." Thus then has the religion of this land been corrupted.

And, replied I, this worthy man, so earnest in his language, so mild and benign and intelligent in countenance, what of him?

Does he not believe all that he proclaims to the people? Hush! said the voice. Hast thou not heard of men who repeat a falsehood until they themselves believe it? Know that this eloquent preacher was the youngest son of a family once noble and far renowned; as a lad, he believed everything which his parents and his tutors taught him: he was destined to succeed to a religious endowment, which was in the gift of the head of his family. He studied, and as he grew in stature and years and knowledge, he came to doubt much that he learnt, and which had been set before him as true. He went to his father and said: "Father, I shall sin against heaven and before God, if I undertake this ministry for which I no longer feel myself fit." And the father fell upon his neck, and wept, and said: "Son, alas! Is it come to this? What can I do for thee? Think and tell me: what other profession wouldst thou follow? Thou art already too old to enter the ranks of the defenders of thy country: reflect then, and answer me to-morrow; for I feel my breath is scant and my days numbered."

That night an alarm rang through the house: that noble heart had ceased to beat.

But the heir, kind as his father, unhesitatingly responded to the feelings of the younger brother. "Jack," said he, "try whether thou canst not manage to get on as thousands get on around thee. I will do what I can for thee; but the old boy has saddled the estate with five thousand pounds for each of you, and I shall be hard put to it for the next few years, to pay off this debt, and keep up the family dignities. But come what may, thou shalt ever find board and food and good clothes at my hands whenever thou requirest them. But, if you persevere in your ministry, I may get you made a bishop, for you are clever; only keep your dissent and disbelief to yourself." So Jack pondered and thought, that though he had a kind, affectionate, brother, yet that this brother might marry, and that his wife

would necessarily be less affectionate than he; so he soothed his conscience, entered on the ministry, and now you see him before you, with his flaxen curly ringlets turned to white; kind to all, and beloved by all around him. Speak! Canst thou cast a stone against him? Say: In that far country, where thou once satest a ruler over men; when thou sawest a thief hast thou not consented unto him? And hast thou not been a partaker with the adulterers? And I answered: God forbid; In that I can safely say, I stand clear: for, sooner than consent with the thieves around me, I relinquished all; all prospects of advancement in that service in which I had toiled faithfully for years. Yet I regret it not. God has granted me a sufficiency in my return to my native land, and sufficient health likewise to enable me to enjoy it; and the repose which I find awaiting me is pleasing and grateful; for I look back to the past with pleasure, and live over and over again, in fancy, the deeds in which as a youth I gloried.

And the voice said: Arise! This day the repose thou lovest is required of thee. Go! write the things which thou hast seen and heard to-day; and brave all consequences. And methought, I rose mechanically and obediently; but as I rose, the preacher looked towards me, and it seemed to me that his aspect became malevolent and menacing. And suddenly he cried out with a loud voice: "Brethren, behold! there is an unbeliever among us; one who does not trust in the efficacy of God-eating, and even now he goeth forth to malign and traduce us, for I heard the tempter say unto him: Arise, and publish all that thou hast seen and heard."

Methought there arose a strange clamour in that house of God, and violent hands were laid on me, and, as I struggled to get free, I awoke, and found myself lying under the trees on the knoll overlooking the peaceful valley of Kingsclerc; and a lady and gentleman were bending over me, faces familiar to me—the kind friends in whose house I was staying. And they said, We saw a rough man stooping over you, he whom you see running

down the hill; and he was pulling at your clothes, and we thought he was looking for your purse: See, have you lost anything? Indeed I had: My purse was gone, but right glad was I to find that I was in Merrie England, and had only lost my purse, instead of my life, at the hands of the God-eaters.

FINIS.