

## A MIDSUMMER SERMON.

BY EDITOR OF "PUCK."

By its own tale the Church is in bad days. Not only are we poor sinners running after strange gods, but the very priests in the temple are turning against their idols, seeking to cast them down and to set up new ones of a strange and fearful fashion. And the keepers of the temple are loath to put them to the door, fearing a revolution that would shatter the temple walls.

The situation is not novel. Periodically, through all its days, the Church has had to face it. First it produces heretics; then it expels them. And after a time of protest it moves forward to where the offenders stood. There follows a time of rest, until other heretics push on and blaze another section of the endless path. All thinking has had to be done outside the Church, and despite its best efforts to prevent it. Only in strenuous and generally bloody opposition to it have we been able to emerge our little way from barbarism. It has never led, but always followed. It was as eager to uphold human slavery in this country as it was two centuries and a half before to punish the heretic who announced the earth's motions. But for the heretics it has hatched we would have no science, no art, no literature, no justice, no humanity. The Christian religion itself rests upon the teachings of one of the rankest heretics of all time—a rough, untaught carpenter, a radical socialist who insulted the prosperous, attacked the most sacred institutions of his day, assaulted brokers in the stock exchange and behaved generally in a manner that, were he to try it in New York to-day, would secure him six months on the island as an "anarchist."

It should be seen, therefore, that there is nothing in the situation to alarm us work-a-day people who have to get along the best we can. Watching the ever-widening circle that rejects its husks of dogma, the Church declares that we are grown indifferent to religion. But this is because it cannot see through the wall it always builds around itself at every resting place. To those outside, it is apparent that we are nearing one of those spiritual awakenings that mark history at regular intervals. Even while the self-immured Church puzzles as to why its congregations fall off, the people that once composed them are finding elsewhere a rational, working religion that their growing minds demand.

The world seems to be demanding a religion that will help it right here and now. Too long has the Church taught man how to die. He now insists that he is worthy enough in himself to be taught how to live. He emphatically rejects all creeds that describe him as a worm of the dust with ninety-eight chances out of a hundred of roasting in perpetuity because he wouldn't let some one else do his thinking for him. He has come to know that there never was such a thing as the "fall of man";—that man has never done anything but rise. He finds a revelation in his own consciousness to which all written revelation must conform or be thrown aside. He has quit singing