



# Whether Common or Not

By WILL M. MAUPIN.

## Biblical Humor

It is high time, my friend, that you disabused your mind of the idea—if it is there—that the Bible is devoid of humor, both in the shape of wit and in the shape of description. Some of the most deliciously humorous descriptions known to mankind are to be found in holy writ. And why not? Man is the only animal that laughs, and some scientists hold that this sense of humor is the one trait that sharply divides man from the lower animals. If the Bible is a perfect book—as Christians hold—then it certainly must appeal to that sense of man which he does not hold in common with the lower animals—the sense of humor.

Multiplied pages would not suffice to point out all the humorous descriptions, the witty passages and the sarcastic and ironic sayings of the book of books. But a few samples may suffice to give many a new line of thought in their study of it. Read the account of King Asa's last illness and death, II Chron. 12:13. "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceedingly great; yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers." The chronicler of that event obviously did not think highly of the medical fraternity.

Samson was a joker. Remember, if you please, how he told Delilah that if he were bound with seven green withes he would be helpless; and how Delilah imparted the information with treacherous intent to the Philistines. Can you imagine that Samson did not chuckle as he thought of the surprise party in store for his enemies; or imagine if you can that the historian of that time failed to perceive the humor of the incident. We opine that Samson was about the only one who laughed at the time, however. And who but a joker would have conceived the idea of confounding his enemies by using foxes as the medium for carrying fire through their harvest fields?

Wit in description? The Bible is full of it. Instead of bluntly calling some of his deriders members of the long-eared fraternity he wittily said: "Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together." Remember what the allies of Pharaoh said of him after they learned that his promises of speedy victory over the Israelites were impossible of fulfillment? "Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is but a noise; he hath let the appointed time pass by."

Repartee? Ben-hadad desires war with Israel and sends word to the king of Israel that he intends to destroy his army. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off," is the contemptuous reply of the Israelite. Amaziah desired war with Jehoash and sent word, "Come, let us look one another in the face." Jehoash replied: "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon saying, Give thy daughter to my son, to wife. And there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon and trod down the thistle." Doubtless Amaziah was more anxious than ever for war after he received that answer to his challenge. To Zephar's dreary commonplaces Job wearily retorts: "No doubt ye are the people and wisdom will die with you." Then Eliphaz, who heard it gets back at Job by saying: "Art thou the first man that was born?

or wast thou made before the hills?" Imagine, if you can, a keener retort than that of Paul during his defense before the council. Angered by some of Paul's remarks, Ananias the high priest commands some one to smite him on the mouth. "God will smite thee, thou whited sepulchre; for sittest thou to judge me after the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to law?" Alarmed at this seeming lese majeste some present asked: "Revilest thou God's high priest?" Paul's answer was the most subtle sarcasm: "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest!"

Did Jesus have a well developed sense of humor? If He did not, then He was not a perfect man. That He was the possessor of a highly developed sense of humor is evidenced time after time. Just recall His sarcastic comment on the scribes and pharisees who sit in Moses' seat: "All therefore whatsoever they did you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not." Great preachers, those scribes and pharisees, but mighty short on the practicing end of it. We laugh at the vanity of Mr. Turveydrop who complacently says: "I suppose I must go and show myself about town; it will be expected of me." Jesus sarcastically referred to the scribes and pharisees who "go arrayed in long clothing," who "love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues." He limited the Turveydrops of His day in few words. Could Jesus appreciate wit in others? Certainly He could, and the proof may be found in the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman who came to Him in behalf of her daughter. "Let the children first be filled, for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs," said the Master. "Yes, Lord," replied the woman, "but the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." That was a witty reply coming from a keen intellect and a trusting heart, and that Jesus appreciated it is manifest from His reply: "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." Do you recall how, in your childhood days, you were wont to take your doll rags and go home because the other children would not play what you wanted them to play? You smile now when you recall these days, so why think it not likely that Jesus smiled when He recalled such things? Did He recall them? Listen! "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another and saying, We have piped unto you and we have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented."

One more little example of Paul's biting sarcasm: In his Corinthian epistle he refers to certain teachers who were sowing the seeds of discord. Such teachers called Paul a fool. "Receive me then as a fool," wrote Paul, "for ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise." Can you beat that for irony?

Perhaps these few of the many examples to be found in the Bible may serve to convince you that the book of books is not a harp with a single string, but an instrument upon which one may run the whole gamut of human emotions. If not, the Architect will undertake to give some more examples at a future time. At any rate, whenever the Architect wants to hunt up something really

sarcastic and full of irony to hurl at his adversaries, he rushes right off to the bookcase, grabs up the well-thumbed old Bible, and turns to Proverbs. There is no armor whose joints may not be pierced with the javelins therein forged.

And thus endeth the first chapter.

## Signs

Is your first thought on arriving home in the evening to get on your slippers?

Do you wear your old shoes until they are actually disreputable rather than break in a new pair?

Do you allow the street car to go by rather than run half a block?

If so, you are growing old.

## Brain Leaks

Obligations are seldom if ever one-sided.

Singular, isn't it, how trouble pluralizes?

Vice has never submitted a request for an eight-hour workday.

Short waits at the depots and long weights at the grocery suits us.

Some people would rather believe an idle rumor than a demonstrated truth.

The chief trouble about wild oats is that there is never a market for the crop.

A lot of people manufacture crosses to bear in order to excite sympathy.

What we need and what we want often marks the difference between life's extremes.

Wouldn't the churches be lonesome places if they were equipped with circus seats?

The man who "lives among his books" is not necessarily a well read man. It depends upon the books.

Patches on the knees are no more signs of a praying Christian than patches elsewhere are signs of indolence.

We often wonder what the doctors cured us of before the discovered that pesky little appendix vermiciformis.

A lot of men who are quick to note a split infinitive are awfully slow to note a fractured code of morals.

We still insist that there is considerable difference between "respect for courts" and "respect for judges."

Most of us can readily give a dozen reasons for not doing something that should be done; the one reason for doing it is that it should be done.

The "has been" is entitled to respectful consideration; the "never was" is an object of contempt; the "is" is the man the world looks upon with admiration.

## JESUS, THE CARPENTER

If I could hold within my hand  
The hammer Jesus swung,  
Not all the gold in all the land  
Nor jewels countless as the sand,  
All in the balance flung,  
Could weigh the value of that thing  
'Round which his fingers once did  
cling.

If I could have the table he  
Once made in Nazareth,  
Not all the pearls in all the sea,  
Nor crowns of kings or kings to be  
As long as men have breath,  
Could buy that thing of wood he  
made—  
The Lord of Lords who learned a  
trade.

Yes, but his hammer still is shown  
By honest hands that toil,  
And 'round his table men sit down,  
And all are equals, with a crown  
No gold nor pearls can soil;  
The shop at Nazareth was bare—  
But Brotherhood was builded there.  
—Charles M. Sheldon in The Independent.

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