

**WIT AND HUMOR  
OF THE BIBLE: A  
LITERARY STUDY**

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Wit and Humor of the Bible: A Literary Study by Marion D. Shutter

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# WIT AND HUMOR

— OF THE

# ✧ ✧ BIBLE.

A LITERARY STUDY.

BY

REV. MARION D. SHUTTER, D. D.

"Bibles laid open; millions of surprises." — *Herbert.*



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1855

Chap. 3

Dedication.

TO MY WIFE,  
MARY WILKINSON SHUTTER.

## PREFACE.

While "many have taken in hand to set forth in order" the pathos and sublimity of the Bible, those literary elements comprised under the title of this book have rarely been mentioned. Feeling that here was a field untraversed, the author of this little volume began an investigation whose results were originally embodied in an article published some years ago in an Eastern review. That article is given in "Poole's Index" as the only one extant upon the subject. Since its publication, additional study has brought to light other examples of the use of Wit and Humor by the writers of the Bible. These later results were embodied in a course of lectures delivered last winter before the students of Lombard University, Galesburg, Ill. They are now given to the public in the present volume. It would be presumptuous to claim that these few pages exhaust the subject. Such a claim the author does not wish to make. Further research would no doubt bring to light instances that have escaped him. It is hoped, however, that these studies may be sufficiently complete to awaken interest in a long-neglected side of our sacred literature.

MARION D. SHUTTER.

Minneapolis, Minn., Dec. 24, 1892.  
First Universalist Church.



### INTRODUCTORY.

“There is still one question before us. If humor be what we have claimed for it, not a mere farce, but the depicting of the whole of human life, then we should expect that the highest literature should be found to contain it. We should expect to find it everywhere; that it should satisfy all that desire which a reading in theology, or philosophy, or science, or history, or a study in art, has created in man. Are there, then, any great books, or still more any great forces in human life which seem devoid of it? Is there any humor in the gospels? This is a dilemma that must be faced; for if humor be life itself, how can human life in its highest development dispense with it?”—*Shorthouse.*

## INTRODUCTORY.

"Even St. Paul could invent and enjoy a humorous pun; the proof of which see Galatians V: 12, in the original; so there is high authority for jesting."—*Kirke*.

THE title of this book will no doubt affect many persons unpleasantly at first. "Flat blasphemy!" I can hear some one exclaim, "We have already had the authority of the Bible undermined by critics, and here is a flippant rogue who goes still farther, and assures us that it is nothing more than a jest-book! This is the very climax and culmination of godless folly."

The author makes haste, therefore, to disclaim any intention of irreverence. To cheapen or degrade sacred things, to "depreciate the moral currency," is at the farthest remove from his intention. It is easy enough to take the language of Scripture and use it for coarse and vulgar purposes, and such use deserves the severest censure. It is not to be tolerated. Passages that

have been light and guidance to multitudes, that have brought strength to the tempted, certainty to the doubting and consolation to the bereaved; that have been bread of life to those who have hungered for righteousness, inspiration to the purposeless and help to the needy,—have been turned into sources of merriment to freshen exhausted wit, and season the insipid discourse of stupidity. Persons whose brains are barren of pleasant conceits find no difficulty in so perverting a Scriptural expression as to make the "groundlings" laugh. In no such motives has this volume originated. The title has been chosen and the work which it covers has been done in the spirit of one who loves the Great Book, and who would secure for it an additional claim upon human affection. The studies of the writer have led him into fresh fields and pastures green, where he has gathered many things out of the ordinary that have given the Bible a larger place in his own heart.

No; the Bible is not a collection of jests; nor do we characterize it as a jest-book when we say that it contains Wit and Humor.