

Jonah's Troubles.

A great many jokes have been cracked about Jonah — and by Christians, too. It is not easy to say why that prophet and his wonderful whale should be considered fair sport by professing Christian believers. The book of Jonah is as much a part of the Bible as the gospel of St. John. And its main incident is not more incredible or or more comical than others that appear in the scriptures, the New Testament being in that respect quite as remarkable as the Old.

Sometimes one is apt to feel that Jonah is being rather unfairly treated. He may himself, if he exists in the spirit, consider that he has grave cause of complaint; and not, indeed, for the first time in his life, as we learn from his story. Supposing him to be with the saints and angels in heaven, may he not be deeply annoyed at finding himself the subject of so much unseemly jocularly on earth?

It does seem a trifle hard, after having gone through all the perils of that memorable voyage, to find the narrative of one's sufferings received with incredulous smiles, or unfeeling jesting comments.

Worst of all, the ill-treatment is so invidious. People don't make so much fun at the expense of the other prophets. No one troubles to laugh at Habakkuk except it may be at his name. All the other prophets, major and minor, have a distinct "pull" over poor Jonah. Elisha, the bald head, for instance, may walk around the realms of bliss with inward peace and quiet satisfaction. Mortals are not eternally firing off little witticisms about him. He does not figure under the head of "Facetiae". He had his own adventures, it is true, and they were nearly as funny as Jonah's. But he thanks God—or if he doesn't he ought to—every day of his eternal life that he never had anything to do with a whale.

What would be more irritating than to have Jeremiah, for instance, coming up and exclaiming in his cheery way: "Jonah, do you know what they are calling you down below? They say you're an allegory." Might not Jonah be justly angry at being called an allegory or a myth, and at his time of life, too?

Could we blame poor Jonah if, in the bitterness of his spirit, he demanded to know why these sub-lunary jokers couldn't leave him alone and get on to Moses' talking serpent, or Balaam's ass, or the Apocalyptic beast with seven heads and ten horns? When, further, the old Obadiah—because he must be old by this time—observed: "Jonah, I see a lot of chestnuts still on the trot anent that fish tail of yours," would it be in diaphanous feathers to stand it and not swear?—[Ex.

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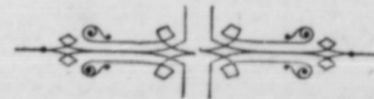
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