

*NATURAL RELIGION.*

"A friend named Blake, living in Chicago, has sent me a letter on "Natural Religion." It is a good letter, but I don't think I care to order any "Natural Religion" just now. In fact I have quite a large stock of it on hand that I would be glad to get rid of on any terms, if I knew what to do with it. I kind of hate to give it to the purchaser. It never did me any good, and I can't guarantee it as an article that ought to be kept in every household.

"Natural Religion" gets into the market early and holds on long. I have seen babies in full possession of it, reducing their playthings to rags, kicking and yelling with infantile rage as though possessed of many devils, howling for pure "cussedness" long before they were able to lisp a prayer. I have seen little children in full possession of "Natural Religion," learning to lie, to deceive, to steal, ill-natured, vain, overbearing, treacherous, bad in a score of ways, and bad in spite of teaching and training, just "naturally" bad. I have seen the guileless savage of the plains, with never a college nor a theological seminary in all his tribe, so full of "Natural Religion" that he couldn't get scalps enough to satisfy the unspoiled cravings of the "natural man," nor drunk enough to celebrate his triumph when the last prisoner was finally carved into small fragments.

Stanley tells us that he finds plenty of "Natural Religion" all through Central Africa, where the hungry heathen, growing up far beyond the warping superstitions of the church and the seminary loves his missionary rare and without gravy, and takes his native "licker" straight from the

wassail bowl of his enemy's skull. You can find it in the slums of New York, and the "Black Hole" of Chicago. No trouble to find "Natural Religion" in this world; there's plenty of it. But somehow, the more one sees of it the less he wants it. Takes a power of grafting to make a crab apple fit for dessert. For my use and comfort, I prefer an Indian who has just been "ground through" a theological seminary, if you please, rather than one who is just crawling out of a buffalo hide tepee, his "natural" expression heightened by streaks of white and black and vermillion, and clad only in a cartridge belt and a Winchester gun, with all the appurtenances thereunto appertaining.

For people who enjoy the natural man in all his native naturalness, "Natural Religion" is no doubt sweet and uplifting and tranquilizing. I prefer it with milder flavors myself; I like it refined, softened, improved by educational processes. If any man wants to skin a sheep and tie the raw and woolly hide about his loins and call himself dressed, I have no objections so long as he doesn't insist on keeping up a calling acquaintance with me. I am willing to admit that he wears natural raiment. As for me, I can get an all-wool suit of the same material that is better looking, better fitting, warmer, more comfortable, more useful, that carries more style and harbors less vermin, and is more commended by the universal voice of refined and educated humanity. There isn't the slightest resemblance to a sheep skin about it by that time; it is wholly denaturalized, I will admit, but that's what makes it valuable and good. Brethren, there is nothing in the world of animal life that is good in its natural