



The System of Nature, Vol. 1: Or, Laws of the Moral and Physical World (Classic Reprint)

Baron D'holbach

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Excerpt from The System of Nature, Vol. 1: Or, Laws of the Moral and Physical World

Whenever he spoke of these, his naturally good temper forsook him.

"Among his friends, the Baron d'Holbach numbered the celebrated Heivetius, Diderot, d'Alembert, Naigeon, Condillac, Turgot, Buffon, J.J. Rousseau, Voltaire, &c.; and in other countries, such men as Hume, Garrick, the Abbate Galiani, &c. If so distinguished and learned a society was calculated to give more strength and expansion to his mind, it has also been justly remarked, that those illustrious men could not but learn many curious and useful things from him; for he possessed an extensive library, and the tenacity of his memory was such as to enable him to remember without effort every thing he had once read."

However, the most praiseworthy feature in d'Holbach's character, was his benevolence; and we now conclude this sketch with the following pithy anecdote related by Mr. Naigeon, in the Journal of Paris: -

"Among those who frequented d'Holbach's house, was a literary gentleman, who, for some time past, appeared musing and in deep melancholy. Pained to see his friend in that state, d'Holbach called on him. 'I do not wish,' said d'Holbach, 'to pry into a secret you did not wish to confide to me, but I see you are sorrowful, and your situation makes me both uneasy and unhappy. I know you are not rich, and you may have wants which you have hid from me. I bring you ten thousand francs which are of no use to me. You will certainly not refuse them if you feel any friendship for me; and by-and-by, when you find yourself in better circumstances, you will return them.' This friend, moved to tears by the generosity of the action, assured him that he did not want money, that his chagrin had another cause, and therefore could not accept his offer; but he never forgot the kindness which prompted it, and to him I am indebted for the facts I have just related."

We have no apologies to make for republishing the System of Nature at this time; the work will support itself, and needs no advocate; it has never been answered, because, in truth, it is, indeed, unanswerable. It demonstrates the fallacy as well of the religion of the Pagan as the Jew - the Christian as the Mahometan. It is a guide alike to the philosopher emancipated from religious thralldom, and the poor votary misled by the follies of superstition.

All Christian writers on Natural Theology have studiously avoided even the mention of this masterly production: knowing their utter inability to cope with its powerful reasoning, they have wisely passed it by in silence. Henry Lord Brougham, it is true, in his recent Discourse of Natural Theology, has mentioned this extraordinary treatise, but with what care does he evade entering the lists with this distinguished writer! He passes over the work with a haste and sophistry that indicates how fully conscious he was of his own weakness and his opponent's strength.

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