

BIBLE CHARACTERS

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Bible Characters by Charles Reade

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CHARLES READE

**BIBLE
CHARACTERS**

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BIBLE CHARACTERS



BY

CHARLES BEADE, D.C.L.

AUTHOR OF

"IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND" "A WOMAN-HATER"
"LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG" ETC.

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1889

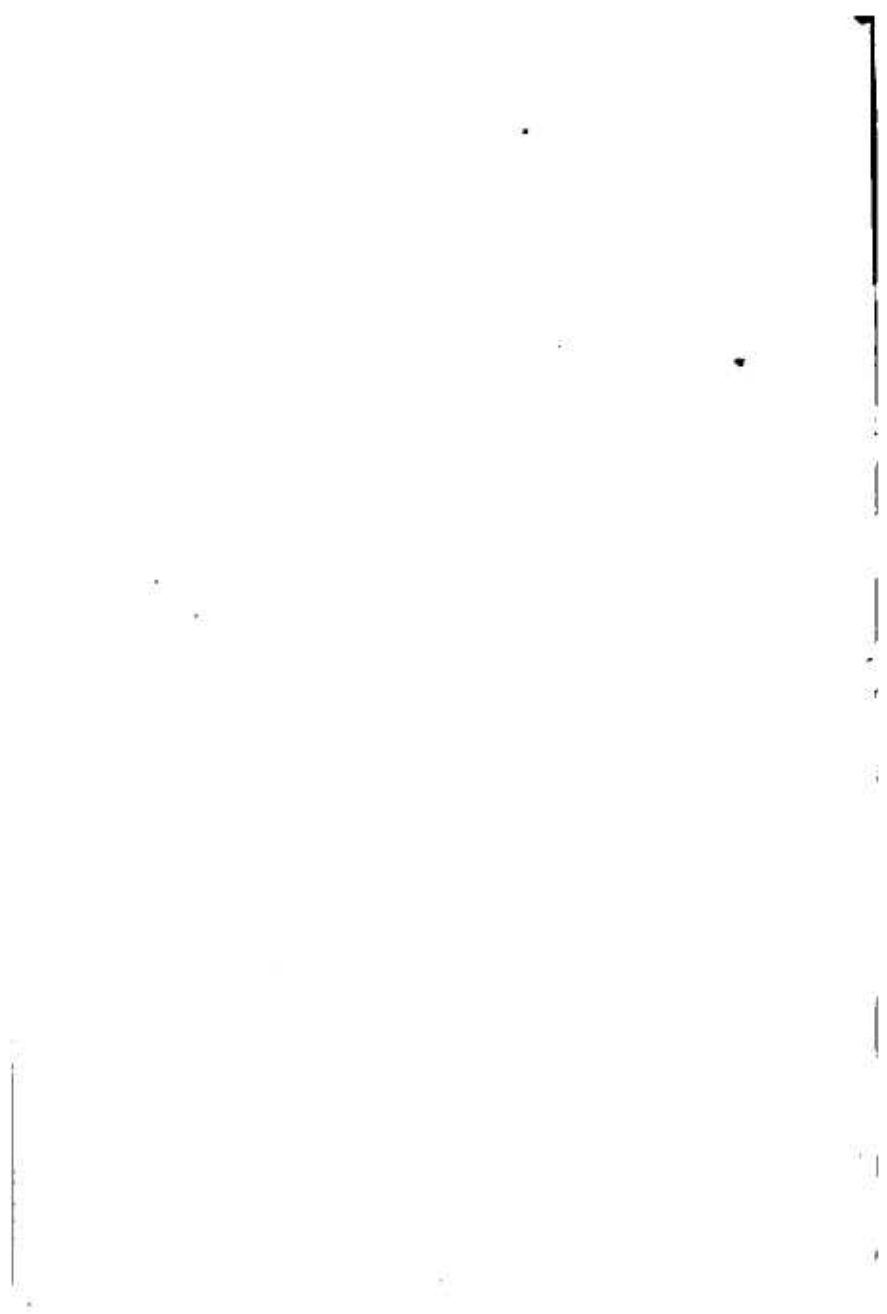
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Mrs. J. H. Davis
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BIBLE CHARACTERS.

I.

A LITERARY MARVEL.

THE characters in Scripture are a literary marvel.

It is very hard to write characters in one country to be popular in every land and age.

Especially hard in narrative. (Drama parades characters by numberless speeches, and auto-graphs them by soliloquy—an expedient false in nature, but convenient in art.)

Hardest of all to create such world-wide and everlasting characters in few words, a bare record of great things said and done.

One test of difficulty is rarity: number, then,

the world-wide characters—if any—in Thucydides and Herodotus, and observe whether Josephus, when he leaves watering the Bible and proceeds to supplement it, has added one deathless character to the picture-galleries of Holy Writ. Shall we carry the comparison higher, and include poetic narrative? then go to the top of the tree at once, and examine the two great epics of antiquity.

The 'Æneid'—what a stream of narrative! what fire of description! what march and music of words! But the characters?—Æneas mediocre, his staff lay figures. Dido just interesting enough to make one angry with Æneas. Perhaps the strongest colour is in the friendship and fate of Nisus and Euryalus; and there a Jewish pen had shown the way.

The less polished but mightier Homer has achieved the highest feat of genius; he has made puny things grand, and fertilized pebbles. He has bewitched even scholars into thinking his Greeks wiser and braver than the Trojans; whereas, if you can shut your ears to his music,

his Greeks were barbarians besieging a civilized city for a motive and in a manner incompatible with one ray of civilization. The motive : from the first dawn of civilization no country with independent states ever got those states to unite in leaving home and besieging a distant city to recover the person of a solitary adulteress. The manner: the first dawn of civilization showed men that cities placed like Troy can always be taken by one of two methods, blockade or assault. But Homer's Zulus had neither the sense to blockade that civilized city and starve it out, nor the invention to make ladders, covered ways, and battering-rams, nor the courage to scale walls, nor even to burn or break through a miserable gate. The civilized Trojans had a silver currency, the Tyrian shekel, called by scholars with Homer on the brain 'the Homeric shekel.' Homer never mentions it, never saw it. The uncivilized Greeks had no currency but bullocks ; no trade but exchange of commodities. The attack and defence of Troy were of a piece with the two currencies : the civilized Orientals, with a silver