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ON READING THE BIBLE.

Once upon a time in the City of Paris a mixed company of men were discussing books and literature generally; and the question arose, supposing a man were condemned to solitary confinement and allowed only one book to read, which of all the books in the world should he choose. The gentlemen who took part in the conversation were, some of them, Roman Catholics, some Protestants, and others Atheists and free thinkers. Their unanimous decision was, that if a man could only get one book to read, that book should be the Bible. They decided thus, not from a religious, but purely from a literary point of view. For its subject matter is more varied and more profoundly interesting than that of any other book that could be named. It has antiquity to make it venerable, for it contains the oldest records in existence. Within the covers of the Bible a man may find scope for the exercise of every faculty of the soul. It deals with the great problems that interest all mankind—the great problems of life work and destiny, on which man has exercised his intellect in all ages.

The subjects of which it treats are of perpetual interest. Generations may come and go, but the great problems of human life forever demand an answer from each successive generation of inquirers. Its variety is as wonderful as its interest is inexhaustible. In it the philosopher can find room for the deepest research; the poet for the highest flights of imagination; and simple folk and little children are never weary of its pages. Apart from religion altogether

it may be said to be the most wonderful of Books. It is intensely human in its subject matter. If one is inclined to meditation he can see in his mind's eye the Ark a-building, he can wander with Abraham amid "the silence of the unpeopled Syrian plains," or at night can watch, with the patriarch from the open tent, the planets in their courses. The scenes of the ancient world, like a brilliant panorama pass before him. He groans with Israel in Egypt under cruel task masters. He rejoices with the chosen people in their deliverance at the Red Sea. Is he of martial instincts, he can march with the warrior host against the enemies of their race and country. With the clangour of the trumpet ringing in his ears he joins in the thrilling shout of the chosen three hundred "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

One by one he sees the inspired prophets of God pass to and fro amid a degenerate and back-sliding people, rebuking, exhorting, and it may be weeping over their sins, with the bitter grief of those who are one with the rebellious people to whom they appeal—one with them in race, history and destiny—one with them too even in guilt which they mourn over.

One by one warriors priests and kings pass before him in solemn and splendid procession. He can see the smoke of the daily sacrifice ascending from the temple courts, or he can mingle in imagination with the tribes who go up to Jerusalem to the great annual festivals of the nation; he can behold "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet standing where it ought not." Or with modern Israel he can weep over the utter destruction and ruin of the temple and the overwhelming succession of disasters which have fallen on the once highly favoured people.

But all this is little compared with the interest it has to him who reads its pages as *the word of God*; who seeks