

**CHRISTIANITY AND THE
IDEAL OF HUMANITY IN
OLD TIMES AND NEW**

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Christianity and the Ideal of Humanity in Old Times and New by John Stuart Blackie

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AND
THE IDEAL OF HUMANITY
IN OLD TIMES AND NEW

BY
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I

DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL

I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.

1 SAMUEL, xvi. 18.



DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL



OF all the fair chances that can befall a young man at his first start in the race of life, the greatest unquestionably is to be brought into contact, and, if possible, to enter into familiar relations with a truly great man. For this is to know what manhood means, and a manly life, not by grave precept, or wise proverb, or ideal picture; but to see the ideal in complete equipment and compact reality before you, as undeniably and as efficiently as the sun that sheds light from the sky, or the mountain that showers waters into the glen. As when the poor primeval dweller in a cave of the wilderness is for the first time brought into the view of a pillared Greek temple or a massive Florentine palace, he leaps into a new conception of what a human dwelling means, and, stirred with an imitative ambition, proceeds forthwith to shape for himself a miniature of the temple or the palace in the shape of a dainty little cottage, so the young man who first comes into living contact with

a Caesar or an Alexander, a Shakespeare or a Bacon, passes at one step, as it were, from a dream of manhood to the fact of a great personal possibility, or at least of a noble human relationship. He may never hope to become a Caesar in war, or a Shakespeare in literature, but certainly he has become feelingly alive to the kinship which he may claim, and the aspirations which he may indulge. What is a great man? A man is great amongst men, just as Mont Blanc is great among Swiss, or Ben Nevis among Scottish mountains; a man rising above the normal level of his kind, with as marked an elevation as these heights above the common reach of heaven-kissing hills, and at the same time possessing all the qualities and virtues that belong to terrestrial elevations generally. This is a qualification that must be distinctly marked. Mere height will not make a Ben Nevis or a Mont Blanc, and so a mere superiority in any of the special qualities or positions that belong to a man will not make a truly great man. The great man must be a complete man, a man all round, but at the same time a man in his peculiar sphere of the social harmony, presenting to the general eye a superiority as marked as any high Highland Ben does above its lowly congeners. A great genius is not necessarily a great man: he may be a Beethoven in the lordship of sweet sounds, a Raphael in the cunning handling of brush and pencil, a Napoleon in the well-ordered sweep of ambitious war: but not therefore a great man.