

THE BOOK OF BOOKS.

A British editor recently invited a number of eminent literary men to communicate to the public through the columns of his journal their answer to the question, what books have influenced them. Their replies are now gathered into a volume, and it is interesting to see, amid all the diversity of personal experience how large a share the Bible has had in directing the current of their life thoughts. Some of them indeed, in the very brief enumeration of books, make no mention of the Scriptures; though such men as Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Gladstone would not be understood as putting any slight upon the Bible by any such omission, which may have seemed to them a mere matter of course. The testimony of others, however, may well be recorded here, in opposition to the view that the Bible is losing its hold upon thinking minds.

Robert Louis Stevenson, speaking of a certain period of his life, says:—The next book, in the order of time, to influence me, was the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I believe it would startle and move any one if they could make a certain effort of imagination and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible.

Mr. H. Rider Haggard closes his paper with these words:—There is one immortal work that moves me still more—a work that utters all the world's yearning anguish and disillusionment in one sorrow-laden and bitter cry, and whose stately music thrills like the voice of pines heard in the darkness of a midnight gale; and that is the book of Ecclesiastes.

Professor John Stuart Blackie, of Edinburgh, says:—For myself, I strongly feel that the two years that, in the threshold of full-grown life, I spent in Gottingen, in Berlin, in Rome and Naples, and the Central Apennines, under the powerful stimulus of new places and new faces, did more to enlarge my ideas, widen my sympathies, and purify my ideal of humanity, than all the books that I ever read except one, and that one was the Bible. To this Book I am indebted for the greatest blessing that can happen to a young man at his first launch out of boyhood into youth, viz.: the firm grip which it gave me of the grand significance of human nature when true to its highest inspirations. I was not more than fifteen years old when I was moved to adopt the ideal ethics of the Gospel as my test of sentiment and my standard of conduct; and to this I adhered steadily thenceforward, just as a young seaman would stick to his compass and to his chart, and a young pedestrian to his map of an unknown country. This early intimacy with the best of books (not a mere Sunday acknowledgment, but a living dedication of the life), kept me free from the power of those youthful lusts against which St. Paul warns Timothy, and which, if not kept under, have a fatal tendency to taint the blood, and to dull the nerve of the moral nature in man. To this Book, and specially to this epistle, I here delight to confess my obligations as to no other influence in the shape of printed paper.

In discussing the question proposed to him, Dr. Marcus Dods says:—What species of influence are we in search of? The writings in which St. Paul disentangled a spiritual and universal religion from the wrappings in which Judaism and incipient Gnosticism would have confined and buried Christianity; the discourses and sayings of our Lord Himself, which flashed endless light through the darkness which had hung around the unseen Father; the great bequest of the old world, the histories and prophecies and psalms which build up a background congenial to the Christian faith; are these to be spoken of, these deepest of all influences, or are we to accept them as the atmosphere essential to life, and which belongs to no one man more than to every other?

Dr. Joseph Parker writes as follows:—It may sound as somewhat singular if I say in sober truth that the book which has influenced me most