

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—PERIODICAL LITERATURE: ITS USE FOR THE MINISTRY.

BY PROF. J. O. MURRAY, D. D., DEAN OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

Is there evolution in literature? There is certainly a "survival of the fittest." How vast the amount of printed matter in the shape of books, theological, political, biographical, historical, poetical, which have their "little day" and "cease to be," except for the antiquarian or the book collector! The best only survive, as having in them what John Milton called "the precious life-blood of a master spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." So in the changes of form, which come upon literature, we may trace a species of evolution. The perfected drama of Shakespeare had its rude predecessor in the crude Miracle Play. The novels of Scott or Thackeray find their ancestry in the humble chap-books which amused our forefathers. We doubt if any department of literature has experienced more transformations than that of the periodical. Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, has been called the father of the English novel in its present form. With equal or greater justice he may be said to be the father of our periodical literature. When for the luckless irony of his *Short Way with Dissenters*, he was cast into Newgate Prison and sent to the pillory by the High Church party, he, as is well known, started his *Review*. This was in 1702. It ran for eight years, and contains matter political, social, moral, and is by turns satirical, statistical and didactic in its treatment of subjects. Then came Steele's *Tatler* in 1709, followed by Addison's *Spectator* in 1711, the latter a very small sheet, 6 in. by 4, containing 8 or 9 pages and issued weekly. I have no space to follow the fortunes of the *Guardians*, *Examiners* and *Freeholders*, the political periodicals which followed in the wake of the *Spectator*; they were all short-lived. Even the *Spectator*, with all its brilliant coterie of contributors, lasted only a few years. In the middle of the century Dr. Johnson tried his hand at periodical literature in his *Rambler and Idler*. Of these, also, the course was very brief.

Then, with the opening of this century came the great quarterlies, *Blackwood*, the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, call up to us the names of Professor Wilson and Gifford, and Jeffrey, and Sydney Smith. Slashing critics they were; the world has not yet forgiven their treatment of Keats and Wordsworth. But they established a form of periodical literature in the *Quarterly*, which has lasted for a century, which still flourishes in vigorous life, and which has done a very noble work. What masterly writing in many of the articles! There Macaulay and Carlyle made their first reputations in their brilliant essays, a noted part of our literature. But the *Quarterly* no longer holds absolute sway in the realm of periodical literature. Its successful rivals in the bi-monthlies and monthlies have gained a lasting hold on English and American readers. They have their own field, they have tilled it well. It has borne the best of fruit, and the readers of to-day cannot dispense with their invaluable articles. If we look abroad (and in this article we shall consider only English periodicals\*) we find such as the *Contemporary Review*, the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review*, to hold the highest rank in this department of literature. At home, the well-known *Harper's Monthly*—first in this field—and the *Century*, and the *Forum*, and the *North American*, which has gone through that process of literary evolution by which a venerable and dignified quarterly becomes a bold, dashing, incisive monthly, with others that might be named, sufficiently show the extent of ground covered by the enterprise of the publishers. Then, too, in Science we have the *Popular Science Monthly*, invaluable in its sphere; and at last what was long needed, a *Missionary Review of the World*, worthy of the cause, and which no pastor can wisely be without.

This glance—for it does not pretend to be an exhaustive catalogue—at the extent of periodical literature in monthly or bi-monthly form, will satisfy every one that its influence is wide growing and strongly determinative of public opinion. I cannot agree with those who think this later development a decadence from the staid and noble old quarterlies. These still live. The *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Review* are still doing efficient work. Far distant be the day when they shall find no constituency among English and American readers. But the monthlies fill a different and needed place. They have their own sphere and fill it admirably. It seems to hold a sort of middle ground between the powerful “leaders” of the daily newspaper and the elaborate, heavy-weighted article of the quarterly. It nearly takes the place of the political pamphlet. What this has been as an instrument in moulding public opinion every student of English history and literature knows. What a weapon it was in the hands of Dean Swift! The story goes that his pamphlet on the

\* The periodical literature of both France and Germany is of the highest order.

*Conduct of the Allies*, brought about the peace of Utrecht. In the colonial struggle with Great Britain, and in the War of Independence, it had a high part to play; and the pamphlet played it well, as our historical archives show. But the pamphlet disappeared when the daily press in its well-studied "leaders" began to discuss public matters. At length, however, the reading public demanded more thorough and lengthened treatment of public questions than the dailies, could give; nor could they wait till the quarterly put in an appearance three months later. Accordingly the monthly comes to the fore and takes up such matters in well-considered, condensed, effective form. Besides, they blend with the weightier matters of the law an element of lighter nature—literature in some form—a story, a short poem, a criticism, a descriptive article. This is but the condiment for the "meat" of the weightier discussion. But a good sauce is no unimportant thing, outside the *ouisine*. The inventor of a good literary sauce deserves well of his country. In this position, and in this manner, we find the monthly discussing social, philosophical, political, moral and religious questions. The old predominance of literary articles is gone. The age is deeply interested in such questions as we have specified above. Our periodical literature is making, I think, a worthy response to this demand. It will illustrate precisely what is meant if I transcribe the table of contents of the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1890. The number is taken at random—the first that came to hand. Authors are not given, as this is not essential to the illustration.

1. Two New Utopias.
2. Mr. Wilkie Collins' Novels.
3. Brotherhoods.
4. The Latest Theories on the Origin of the English.
5. The Unfaithful Steward.
6. Profit-Sharing.
7. The Home-Rule Movement in India and in Ireland.
8. A Lumber Room.
9. Brazil, Past and Future.
10. Running for Records.
11. What Stanley has done for the Map of Africa.
12. Robert Browning.

Without going into any very close analysis of the contents of these articles, it will suffice to say that of the twelve, one-fourth would be of direct use to any clergyman and one-half, of direct or indirect service to him in his calling. No intelligent reader of our periodical literature but must have been struck by the large amount of space they give to the discussion of what are called the "live" questions of the day. The *Century Magazine*, in its projected series on social questions, of which Mr. Dike's admirable article on the Family is the

first instalment; Professor Fisher's timely and able articles on the Nature of Revelation, are but instances of many that might be given. The subject of Divorce is coming to the front and must be investigated. It has been cleverly treated in some of our periodicals, the *North American Review* for January having five brief articles on this topic from five of our representative women. This is a theme on which the pulpit should be heard from. The question of the family is as much the question of religion as it is of the State, and nothing so deeply touches the most sacred interests on earth—those of the home—as the shameful, the frightfully immoral tendencies of divorces as they prevail. And what is exactly to the point in this discussion, it is in the articles on this subject to be found in our periodicals, that the information can be obtained on which intelligent opinion can be made up. This is but one of many subjects treated of, on which the pulpit needs the expressed thought of to-day. The range is wide. Theological matters are handled—witness the late discussion in one of the English periodicals between Mr. Huxley and Dr. Wace. The various aspects of social science are largely unfolded. Missionary topics are handled, not always wisely but sometimes with great ability and service to the cause of missions, as was the case just after the great Missionary Convention met in London. Moralities are freely discussed. The most scathing exposure of the “cheating” systematically practised on the turf was made lately in an English periodical; and when the eloquent Bishop of Peterborough comes to the defence of, or apology for, a mild type of betting in one of the periodicals, we should all know what an ecclesiastic has to say on that side of things.

We are then prepared to ask the question directly as to the use for the ministry of an acquaintance with periodical literature. *First*, it is the best way of keeping in contact with the currents of thought that are circulating freely in the world. It will not answer in this age for the minister to have much of the reclusé about him. He is expected to have a broad scholarship, and one that is conversant with the nineteenth century. I could instance men in the ministry who are reasonably well versed in the theology of the seventeenth century, who have little or no acquaintance with what is stirring in the thought of to-day. Their ignorance of current thought affects their preaching, it has a far-away sound. Even when the truth proclaimed is true alike for all centuries, somehow the accent of to-day is not in it. The influence of such a man is curtailed. If he is not well read some members of his congregation are—the lawyer, the doctor, the young collegian who comes home in vacations and wonders whether his pastor has not heard of the discoveries at Bubastis, or the theory of conscience which the philosophy of Herbert Spencer maintains. Even though the preacher makes no direct use

of his knowledge in his sermons, and never alludes to any discussion in the *Forum* or *Nineteenth Century*, still if he knows what they are saying about matters his preaching will have a different tone. It will not be one whit less evangelical, but it will have the power that comes when a man can say, "Yes, I have read what is to be said on the other side, and have not confined myself to systems of theology and commentaries."

I have said the periodical is the best way of introducing any one to a knowledge of what is going on in the world of to-day. It is the best because it is the quickest. Here are condensed articles touching on a variety of subjects, readable, prepared by specialists often in their several departments, and a few hours every month keeps one *en rapport* with what is doing in science or politics or philosophy or social science or moral reforms. Ministers are busy men. What time is left after the hard study on the sermon is taken up by the ceaseless round of parish visiting—that daughter of the horse-leech crying, "Give, give." There are, however, the spare minutes, the odd half-hour, perhaps the last before bed-time. If these can be utilized they amount to a great deal in the course of a year. They can be utilized in two ways. One way is to keep a book in hand which does not demand consecutive reading; a book, for instance, like Amiel's *Journal*, and taking a glance over its pages. Another way is to keep the periodical for such times and take an article for the spare half-hour. They thus become great economizers of time. And what is more, they will often save the necessity of going through a book. They give you in far shorter compass certain views which are important for you to know, and which you could know in any other way only by the longer process of reading through an entire volume. Economy of time is no small consideration for a hard-worked clergyman. But economy of money is no less important for many. For the price of a volume you can have the monthly for a year. Look now at the index when the year has closed and see what an amount of reading on a variety of subjects. A yearly issue of the *Contemporary* or the *Nineteenth Century* is in itself a little library. To gain the same amount of knowledge without the aid of the monthly would have cost twenty times the sum paid for subscription, to say the least. Not only is economy of time gained, but there is a mental relaxation also secured. The tired brain may find this in a good poem or a good novel, but it is quite as well found in a good periodical. What could more effectually take off the thoughts from the hard subjects of the next Sunday's sermon, or the trying case of that parishioner, than to read one of Kennan's articles on Siberian prisons? Surely this use of the periodical is too patent to need any further comment.

Allusion has already been made to its importance as embodying

discussions of moral and social questions peculiar to the day. How large a part such discussions play in their contents, any inspection of them will show. It seems to be their life. Their literary and historical articles alone would not float them. There is no more hopeful sign for our generation than the fact that so much interest is felt in such questions as divorce, gambling, results of missionary effort, slave trade in Africa as carried on by the Arabs, etc., etc. What renders the presentation of some of these questions so useful to a clergyman is that both sides are written up. A few months ago an article appeared in one of the English Monthlies, showing that "Agnosticism" had no possible future as a form of religion. Quickly an article followed on the other side. But it was easy to see that writer number one had the best of it. It is this *both-sided* discussion of these moral and social questions which constitutes, perhaps, the great use for periodical literature by the clergy. They need to be kept wide awake on all such topics. They need not give much time to the question of marrying a deceased wife's sister. But the pulpit has been, I think, strangely silent on the great and gross evils connected with divorces as granted among us. It can be silent no longer. This is one of the many subjects discussed which illustrate the importance of keeping abreast of the thought of the times. Mediæval clergymen are an anachronism.

There is a possible danger connected with the free use of this periodical literature on which it may be desirable to say a word. If reading is too much restricted to it, it will breed superficiality. One occasionally meets a man all whose reading is in this line. He reads no books—he reads all he can find about books. His knowledge is therefore more or less superficial. The use of periodical literature is largely to stimulate reading of books. The subject is presented in an interesting way on the pages of the monthly. If the reader has time and opportunity, he can go on to further investigation. It need scarcely be said that a well-trained minister would go beyond the reviews, if he meant to be thoroughly posted on any topic. But he will none the less prize the review article which stirred his interest in the subject and made him ask "What are the best books on that subject and how can I get them."

But how can the ministry get access to these periodicals? In large towns or cities there are reading-rooms, doubtless, which offer him access to them. But in smaller towns and parishes the thing is readily and cheaply accomplished by the simple device of a club. Let six, eight or ten parishioners, with the minister at their head, club together and purchase the periodicals they desire. Devise some simple plan, the simpler the better, for their circulation from one subscriber to another. The whole thing is accomplished and you do not have to go to a library—and if the numbers are carefully kept, they

can be sold at the end of the year and the next subscription will be less expensive.

As to what periodicals may be most serviceable to the ministry, it may be difficult to suggest. But of those published in England, two certainly are to be safely commended, the *Contemporary* and the *Nineteenth Century*. For years I have been a close reader of these two, and confess I am more and more impressed with their value. Compared with periodicals of their own class in this country, their articles are more thorough, more weighty, and of higher literary execution. It is a matter of congratulation also that their articles are so cosmopolitan. *Home Rule* has occupied a large space in their columns, but this is hardly a national, much less a local question. Its interests overleap all boundaries of nationality. To name our own periodicals is perhaps a superfluous task. They are too well known to need any comment from me. In all illustrated magazines, American publishers have distanced foreign competitors. And while some may have had occasion to bemoan the spread of inferior and vicious reading matter, which cheap printing has made so wide, let us be thankful that our periodical literature is, as a class, so wholesome, so elevated and so liberally patronized.

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## II.—INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS.

BY PROF. ARTHUR S. HOYT, HAMILTON COLLEGE, N. Y.

[While not at all agreeing with its conclusions, we admit this article to our pages in the spirit of fairness that our readers may have both sides of the subject before them to guide their decisions. Long and wide observation has convinced us, personally, that there are serious and growing evils, not only to the students but to the community at large, connected with and growing out of the system of "Athletics" as now practised in college and out of college, which challenge attention, not only on the part of college authorities, and parents and guardians who confide their children and wards to their protection and guidance, but of our civil authorities as well; for the example and influence of many of these public athletic contests are singularly demoralizing, and promotive of the gambling spirit now so prevalent in every walk of life.—EDS.]

A WRITER in the April HOMILETIC REVIEW opposes Intercollegiate Athletics for the following reasons: College Faculties are almost unanimous against the practice, yet too cowardly to interfere; the contests are inimical to general physical culture, attended with serious physical results, detrimental to learning and demoralizing to the character of the students—serious charges, that might well "excite earnest inquiry upon the part of those who are concerned as to the welfare of friends in college."

Can these charges be substantiated from a broad survey of the facts? In no spirit of controversy, but solely in the interests of the truth, the present writer would return a most emphatic No.