

THE CANADA  
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY  
AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

JUNE-JULY, 1890.

A PLEA FOR HOMER.

(*Not the "Homeric Question."*)

BY E. W. HAGARBY, B.A., HEADMASTER MOUNT FOREST HIGH SCHOOL.

“WHAT is the occasion at the present time for entering a plea on behalf of the Maconian bard?” “Has he not stood the test of ages?” “Who proposes to disturb him?” These questions will naturally be asked by those who belong to the old school of thought, who are perhaps not in touch with the tide of restless sentiment at present abroad, who are not aware of the “advanced” and “practical” views held in certain quarters where at least they might be last expected. The proposal to remove Homer from the curriculum of Junior Matriculation has been made, and made seriously; moreover, it has been made not by those who might be suspected of seeking to drive classics from the schools, but by some who, whatever their reasons, cannot be accused of any but the sincerest desire to maintain Latin and Greek on an effective basis in our secondary education. It is, if possible, to convince these persons, or at any rate to awaken a sentiment on the other side

of the question that the present article is designed.

What, then, are the grounds on which it is proposed to drop Homer from the school curriculum and postpone him till a later stage in the student's course? First, it seems to me, the proposal is based on a false analogy. The general statement is advanced that, in studying any language, the later forms ought to be thoroughly mastered before any attempt is made to learn the older. Hence, it is argued, an opportunity should be given to the young student to make himself practically and minutely familiar with Attic Greek as written by Xenophon or spoken by Demosthenes before entering on the strange and widely divergent dialect of the Homeric poems. In the time ordinarily at the disposal of candidates preparing for Junior Matriculation it is claimed to be impossible for the student to make any material progress in a knowledge of the dialectic forms and structure of Attic Greek and in