THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—WHAT CAN POETRY DO FOR THE MINISTRY?

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DR. STALKER said to the students of the Yale Divinity School that of the foremost preachers of Scotland to-day, not one that he knew was unfamiliar with the higher English poetry. The inference was thus clear that poetry had to do with the best teachings of the Gospel.

It is a noticeable fact that poetry has been a large factor in shaping the controlling minds of the century in Church and State. With what eagerness the young men of Oxford and Cambridge fifty and sixty years ago discussed the merits of Wordsworth and Byron and Shelley! Both Bishop Wilberforce and Cardinal Manning were parties in the famous debate at the Oxford Union, in 1829, on the question of Shelley's superiority to Byron. A group of great minds in the English Church—Arnold of Rugby; Maurice, Kingsley, Robertson, Stanley, Dean Alford, Archbishops Trench and Tate—constantly acknowledged their debt to Wordsworth, and for a generation made his poems the necessary cult for the well-trained Englishman. Chalmers, Guthrie, McLeod, and Spurgeon were lovers of the poets. John Bright, during the sessions of Parliament, read Milton each day as the training of mind and speech for his great debates. Mr. Gladstone has been no less devoted to Tennyson and Browning; and Canon Farrar, in a lecture in this country, declared the knowledge of the poetry of Robert Browning to be equivalent to a liberal education.

The list of Englishmen might be matched by eminent Americans of this and the last generation: Webster, Choate, Sumner, Lincoln, Bushnell, Beecher—men of widely different calling and station—all loved the great poets. They have not been poets themselves, but they have had the fine sensibilities to appreciate poetry, and their nature craved it both as strength and recreation, and their speech took something of its beauty and motion in the flush of intense emotion.