

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXV.—MARCH, 1893.—No. 3.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CHARACTER IN THE MINISTRY.

BY A. P. PEABODY, D.D., LL.D., CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

LIFE never originates spontaneously. In all the realms of animated nature it is uniformly derived and transmitted from pre-existent life. So say all our scientists, whatever may be their theories as to the mode in which life first began upon the earth. This law of nature has equal scope in the universe of mind and soul. No nation has reformed or civilized itself without an initial impulse from beyond itself. No isolated man has, without the action of other minds, raised himself from ignorance or saved himself from sin. In the nation, in the man, as in the animal or the plant, there is development, progress, growth; but the germ comes from life already in existence. Only life can kindle life.

Spiritually we have or may have two pedigrees. From the first Adam—one or many—have been transmitted the traits that adapt us to our earthly habitation; from the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, we have the germs of the heavenly life. The heritage from the first Adam is ours inevitably, nor would we rid ourselves of it if we could; for there is no part of our native humanity which may not be so purified and hallowed as to be worthy of immortality. But that which alone can sanctify the earthly and make it heavenly must come from Christ, and almost always through those who are already His. It may, indeed, come from Him immediately, and we therefore circulate the Scriptures where the living voice and the living example cannot reach. But in Christian communities, where the Bible is ostensibly known, it excites little curiosity or interest unless there be those who breathe its spirit, feel its power, and attest the Divine that is in it by its embodiment in their own characters. Were we to ascertain from every Christian in this country the influence that first arrested him in guilt or doubt or indifference, we should find in nine