

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXII.—NOVEMBER, 1891.—No. 5.

## REVIEW SECTION.

I.—EUGÈNE BERSIER.

BY PROFESSOR WILLIAM C. WILKINSON, D.D., TARRYTOWN, N. Y.

If a Greek critic of the Attic prime, supposed living again among us moderns, should, merely from the point of view of oratoric art, compare the achievements in pulpit eloquence of the various races of mankind, it would no doubt be to French preachers that he would award the palm of supremacy. Among those French preachers (of whatever time) such a critic, free from every prepossession, would, I feel sure, find no one superior to the subject of the present paper. Critics less severe and less severely Greek—Asiatic, let us say, rather than Attic—might pronounce a different judgment. A warping influence admitted from an admixture of romanticism in the literary taste might not unnaturally lead to a preference of something English or of something American over anything French. But to your pure Attic sense the French would infallibly seem finer. And of the French, as I said, nothing would seem more free from fault or defect than the eloquence of Eugène Bersier.

It is thus a very high, but it is also a somewhat peculiar praise that I bestow on this eminent French preacher. I prepare, as far as I may, my readers for considering the claims of a master in pulpit oratory contrasted, but rather in quality than in quantity of merit, with all of his peers in the list of illustrious names furnishing subjects for the present series of papers. It is Attic performance that is here to be judged; we must apply Attic canons of art and Attic standards of taste in judging it.

This means, of course, that nothing to strike by eccentricity, extravagance, excess, no indulgence of individual caprice, no lawlessness willing to be mistaken for independence, no sins against taste hoping to pass for audacities of genius, no violences of expression doing duty for originalities of thought—nothing whatever of this sort need be looked for in Bersier. All with him is measure, proportion, propriety, pure taste, sound judgment, undisturbed dominance of the rule of not too much, order, harmony,