

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

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

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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.