

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—THE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE AS A CLASSIC.

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ALL Christendom understands that the Christian revelation has been delivered in the form of a literature. The whole world of education is agreed to place literature in the front rank among instruments of education. Yet the conclusion which might seem to follow from these premises by no means tallies with our practice; our directors of education take us for literary training to the Greek and Roman classics, to Old English writers, to Shakespeare and Milton, to every source rather than the literature of the Bible.

No doubt this is due in a large measure to the fact that we do not distinguish the literary from other sides of Bible study. The Bible is a manual of devotion; it is a court of appeal in theological dispute; it contains the history of the Jewish nation and the Christian Church. These uses of sacred writ may be vastly more important than any literary study, but they are none the less outside it. One homiletic commentator may interpret a psalm as a Messianic prophecy; another may see in it only national aspirations; a third develops its thoughts as expressing the experience of the individual soul. But there is a surface interpretation from which all three commentators must start, and which is the same for all; and it is just these primary interpretations that constitute the subject matter of purely literary study.

Such treatment differs even from what has come to be called the "higher criticism." For, whatever may be the intention of the critics, this term is identified in the popular mind with historical analysis, with the question whether in genuineness, in authenticity, in mode of composition, in authority, the sacred writings are or are not what they have been supposed to be. Of course such questions have a right to be included in the general term literary study. But every teacher of literature must have been led by his experience to note the important practical distinction between two kinds of knowledge—knowing books and knowing