

ever, only indirectly equip the preacher for his work in constructing sermons, and in teaching the people things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Poetry, history, social science, physical science, astronomy, geology, are secular studies. They or their congeners can only do an indirect and secondary office in the fitting out of a Christian teacher. But we have much to learn yet if we have not learned how important are indirect and secondary agencies in life. I hope to be able to show that, though indirect and secondary, secular studies can be made fruitful in large and blessed results to the preacher.

There is derivable from secular studies a mental stimulus and refreshment which the preacher, from the nature of his work, sorely needs. Every preacher knows how jaded the mind becomes in an unvarying round of theological study. Commentaries grow fearfully dry. Theological treatises repel that once attracted. The Sunday draws on apace, and the preacher turns over his Bible in search of a text, or takes up his writing-materials for a sermon, with a sigh. He begins to think of vacation, yet a great way off. The thought of parish visits yet to be made oppresses him. How can he get out of these doldrums? It is a law of the mind that it must have a variety of mental pabulum. The human stomach cannot stand one, and only one, sort of food. It is said that the dyspeptic habit of Scotchmen is due to their excessive devotion to oatmeal. I have sometimes thought that mental ailments could be found paralleling the bodily, and from like causes. We have mental dyspeptics and mental anæmia. Preachers suffer from both these mental diseases. The symptoms appear in the preaching. The sermons are querulous, mournful, or they are bloodless, full of abstractions, as mental dyspepsia or anæmia may be the malady. What is the cure? Why, change of diet, perhaps. Let the preacher shut up his commentary and open his Browning or Shakespeare. Let him forego his wonted excursions into theology, and go out into fields of science. The first part of every week had better be given up religiously to this pursuit of secular studies. Monday, Tuesday, perhaps even Wednesday occasionally, can be well used along this line. It fertilizes the mind. It rests the mind. It stimulates the mental powers, while at the same time it refreshes them.

I trust many readers of the *HOMILETIC* have in their libraries a copy of "Forty Years' Familiar Letters" of Dr. James W. Alexander. In these letters to his friend, Dr. John Hall, of Trenton, New Jersey, Dr. Alexander drops many wise hints, valuable suggestions, and striking comments. It is a storehouse of admirable pastoral as well as homiletic teachings, straight from the experience of a man who said his highest desire was to be a faithful parish minister. In looking through this correspondence, I was struck with his use of secular studies. They gave him mental quickening and recreation. He reads Plutarch, Hurrell, Froude, Bailey's "Festus," Prescott's Histories, Grote's Greece, Carlyle's Sterling, and these are samples of the variety and