

would gratify our curiosity. Its writers, under Divine guidance, were unbiassed and absolutely truthful. (Occasional trifling confusions of names and numbers, which are inevitable in writings preserved for hundreds of years in MS., cannot affect the historic worth of the Scriptures for any candid reader.) Rightly read, this history shows explicitly what can only be found implicitly in other histories, how from age to age, in spite of man's weakness and wickedness, the purposes of God are carried out.

Yet, instead of tracing the march of events by aid of chronology and geography, the handmaids of all history, and using the field-glass that shows each part in relation to the whole, we take the microscope for minute investigation of words and phrases; we revel in whimsical applications of morsels of misunderstood narrative: using for instance, I quote facts, Gen. xliii. 27 and 1 Sam. xxi. 8 (last clause) as texts for exhortations that might have been fitly based upon Rom. vi. 6 and Rom. xii. 11; and thus treat the Bible as the fashionable folks of the Regency in Louis XV.'s reign treated the fine and valuable engravings whose figures they cut out to paste on fans and fire-screens. We can prove anything from Holy Writ when we regard it as a long string of "texts" whose dates and contexts may be ignored—*e.g.*, that God does not exist, from a sentence of Psalm xiv. 1.

Sometimes indeed we read it straight through, content to pass from the history of Esther to that of Job, who lived more than 1000 years earlier; from the end of Judah's Captivity in Daniel to the latter days of the kingdom of Israel in Hosea; from Obadiah's denunciation of Edom's exultation over the fall of Jerusalem to Jonah's message 200 years before to Nineveh, which had been swept away ere Jerusalem was attacked; from S. Paul in his Roman prison writing to the Colossians to S. Paul at Corinth, eleven years back, writing to the Thessalonians. Then we complain that the prophets are uninteresting, and S. Paul's teaching hard to understand!

The first "clew" (or guiding thread) to a right understanding of Holy Writ is to realise that it is an organic whole, to which each of its parts has a definite relation; the second clew is to ascertain that relation. Not that we