

philosophy of history, in his marvellous foresight into the course of events, and in his sublime confidence in the victory of righteousness and God ; but he is like other poets as to his methods and forms of representation. Poetry is creative. The imagination creates scenes and incidents as the vehicle for spiritual truth with no intention that they should be taken seriously and literally in all their minutiae. Dante describes a vision and what he saw in it, and then says :

" Soon as my soul had outwardly returned
To things external to it which are true,
Did I my not false error recognize " ("Purgatorio" xv.).

That is, a mere vision, bodying forth no literal fact, is not false if it symbolizes a truth and so conveys it to the mind. That is the spirit of all high poetry. Now this Apocalypse of John is the poetic book of the New Testament. It contains the poetry of Christian hope. In the interpretation of this book familiarity with the great imaginative literature of the world, especially with the splendid poetry of the Old Testament prophets, with its visions and dreams, its symbols and its types, and the power to sympathize with such emotional and poetical expressions of truth, count for vastly more than mere cold logical precision in the interpretation of language. In such literature it is unwise to look with microscopic care for logical accuracy in thought or chronological sequence of events, and to interpret the poetic, gorgeous drapery of the great conceptions as if meant to indicate the details of history written in advance. The best interpreter of such a book is a great poet, one who can abandon himself to the spell of the emotion stirred by its sublime phraseology. John Milton re-