

on land and on the ocean's billow, by the youngest and the oldest, and that with pleasure, instruction, and edification—soothing the pangs of remorse, rising the hopes of the disconsolate, reproaching yet healing the crimes of the sinner, leading the criminal to repentance, and the repenting to newness of life; and yet this same book has employed the whole lifetime of the wisest and best of men thoroughly to comprehend its history, its purport, its nature, and its origin. Though used as a class book for the youngest in schools, it is still the constant study of the most learned in their closets. Though some parts are so simple and clear, "that the wayfaring man cannot err therein," there are others which have still escaped the erudition of ages—after volumes upon volumes have been heaped up in order to explain them. So far has this been carried in regard to one short epistle—that addressed to the Hebrews—that a work containing no less than 2000 octavo pages, concisely written and confined to its interpretation has, appeared upon it.*

It is obvious, after these reflections, that it is no easy, short, or light subject, on which we are entering. A work that cannot be understood in a lifetime, cannot be even superficially examined in an hour. It will be sufficient here, first to point out the prevailing points of view from which judgments so different have proceeded, and then the chief errors against which each who handles the sacred volume must be careful to guard himself. We shall then understand why opinions vary, and what are the views which an impartial examination of it is likely to lead us to form.

* By Prof. Bleek, of Bonn.