

Next to the poets, the sacerdotal class has, perhaps, been the most prolific in historians; from the priests of olden Nile, engraving on those time-defying pyramids, the chronicles of the swart tyrants of Memphis, of Thebes, of Sais, and of Meroe; to the cenobite in his narrow cell, and the courtier confessor, close at the ear of royalty—the one noting down the struggles of his order, the pages of the other glittering with

“Barbaric pearl and gold,”

as he leads us on from scene to scene of pompous pageantry.

But the old bardic and priestly annalists left the subject anything but pure metal. It was rough alloy, with the truth largely amalgamated with “baser matter” of myth and fable. This is to be sifted, purified, and smelted, ere it comes out virgin ore. Another class of historians come forward to essay this mighty task. The critic-historian, the antiquary, and the archæologist set to work,—the first sifting away the legend; the second testing it by some half-effaced inscription, or still more mystic picture-story of the event; the third disembowelling from the earth new Pompeiis, Ninevehs, Elephantas, Copans, Petras, Balbecs, Luxors! scanning Egyptian obelisks, Mexican pyramids, Hindoo cave-temples, prairie fortress-mounds, Scythian barrows, Erse round-towers, and Druidic tumuli—resurrection-men, in fact, digging the dead Past from its quiet grave, that the present may dissect and study it, and learn from it the lessons of experience. To our Niebuhrs, our Stephenses, and our Layards, we owe more than we shall be inclined to pay perhaps; for we can scarcely forgive them for undeceiving us of happy delusions, telling us our gems are paste, and what we thought a nugget was a paltry bit of iron pyrites.

The historical critic, then the antiquary and the archæologist leave us the metal comparatively pure, but even yet it is but

“A rude unprofitable mass—

The mere materials with which wisdom builds.”

A *third* class now step forward, and set to work upon this mass of fact. They classify, compare, infer, and generalize; and from facts, elucidating principles, they are now gradually maturing a science, which, even in its infancy, promises the richest results. From the rude heap of useless facts rises slowly the temple which wisdom hath built,—the isolated landmarks and soundings form the basis of a map of the dealings of Deity with mankind. This temple or this map, symbolizes the *philosophy* of history.

We do not mean to assert that the *whole* of this philosophy will ever, in the present mundane state of imperfect knowledge and light, be fully discovered by any man, or number of men. But we argue that a denial of the *existence* of such a philosophy is equal to an assertion that the great Disposer of events works on any predetermined plan; and that a denial of man's ability to find out *any* part of that plan is equal to an assertion that the Bible, which is among other things a history, is given to us without any clue to its