

fall and the song of birds. Now, the Bible comes to us as a volume of tracts written at different times throughout a period of twelve hundred years, written in languages which have long ceased to be spoken with purity by any people, written by persons of different rank and genius and educational training; written at periods and in countries far remote, whose customs and products and scenery were very different from those of our own time and country; and the subjects discussed or alluded to are extensive and varied. These things present many difficulties of greater or less moment to the student of the Bible; it is not easy for him to place himself in thought, in the circumstances of the writer, circumstances so different from those in which he is actually placed; and questions not unfrequently suggest themselves as to whether the meaning of particular words and phrases, and the point of certain allusions have been ascertained. But is the fact that there are such difficulties in the Bible any argument against its authenticity and genuineness? On the other hand, are not difficulties of this kind to be looked for, and would not the want of them be contrary to all experience? If the language of Malachi had been precisely the same as that of Moses, the fact would have indicated an intellectual stagnation to which history affords no parallel. No student of English literature wonders that the style of Macaulay differs from that of Sir Walter Raleigh, or that after a careful study of Tennyson he yet finds it difficult to understand Chaucer. The want of such difficulties would have been unspeakably less easy to account for than the existence of them.

Again, a large portion of the Scriptures is avowedly prophetic, and the general object of that portion is to excite attention, and to enable men at once to conjecture when and where they should look for the fulfilment of a predicted event, and give them a sufficient assurance, upon reflection, that the event was really foreseen. In the prophetic parts of Scripture there are difficulties similar to those found in other parts of the sacred volume, and there are difficulties which are peculiar. Figurative language is much more abundantly employed than in the historical or purely didactic portions, and figures have always more or less of indefiniteness. Just as the things of heaven are described in terms primarily referring to the things of earth, so the things of the *future* are spoken of in terms belonging to the time and circumstances of him who utters them. Is there any thing unnatural in this?—any thing to excite suspicion? Is not the circumstance, on the other hand, just what might be expected, and would not the want of such difficulty have been a greater objection?

Another difficulty, arising from the mode and circumstances in which the Scriptures have been given to man, and transmitted from one generation to another, is to be found in the contradictions which are occasionally met with. We speak not now of *apparent* contradictions, (these we shall have occasion to refer to in another connec-