

in which it is to be made, are in the choice, the private, inscrutable choice of the Eternal; and we can only deal with the fact as it comes out to our observation. And, also, we should not overlook the widely practical truth, that Providence trains men by means of obscurity as well as by means of light. The haze which we throw around many subjects, when our children desire to know what we do not think it prudent to reveal, is a healthful dimness stimulating the inventive powers while it awakens their trustful nature, and producing the conviction that there is far more in this life of theirs than relates to the necessities and toys of youth. And we shall fall in with the obvious designs of Providence, and consult our truest interests, if, obtaining just light enough to see the realities of Revelation, we exercise the feelings of filial confidence, and follow on in hope of present dimness yielding to perfect day. And here I cannot but quote the lines of one of the greatest and most devout of living men:—

“Lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead thou me on,  
The night is dark and I am far from home,  
Lead thou me on.  
Keep thou my feet; I do not wish to see  
The distant scene—one step enough for me.”

I think I cannot better secure your interests, and make my own views clear, than by making a few propositions almost self evident in their truthfulness, and then point out their bearing upon the various events in the sacred narrative which appears to be singular or inexplicable.

#### 1. *The Records themselves are most ancient.*

I speak now of the records themselves, as written authentic histories, and not of the particular events narrated, and I say that so far as investigations have been made, learned men have not fallen upon any manuscript or book that for antiquity can be compared with this book, unless it be the book of Job. Whatever monumental inscriptions may have existed about the date of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, historical portable documents of that date are not to be found. The most ancient Chinese M.S. known to be historical, was written about 600 B. C., that is, in the days of Jeremiah. Most ingenious, and many amusing arguments have been advanced *pro and con*, as to the date and authorship of the book of Genesis; and were I to detail one half of the methods and weapons by which the gentlemen of the Higher Criticism have assailed one another, you would be surprised to see how “doctors differ.” There is one fault which I am always disposed to find with the members, of what, on account of their ruling tendency, may well be termed the “Destructive School of Criticism”; it is, that they too frequently proceed to their work on the gratuitous and unexpressed supposition, that the writers whose books they examine, are literary artists, who compose their works with the skill and taste which characterise literary men. Kaunis, in his history of German Protestantism speaks of “an age” in the course of European life, “which undertook to determine all the forms and institutions of life by the pure *idea*.” In like manner many critics have approached the examination of both sacred and secular books, too strongly influenced by their own notions of what or how the writers ought to have written, without allowing sufficiently for the liberty