

less extent, gives to it, according to the degree of ambiguity, such confirmation. "The obscurity which attends the prophecies of Scripture," as has been well observed by Dr. Dick, "has proceeded from the wisdom of God, who designed to give such notice of future events as should excite a general expectation of them, but not to make the information so perspicuous and minute as to induce men to attempt either to hasten or to impede their fulfilment."

But we remark again, that the difficulties of Scripture furnish a powerful stimulus to the study of the Bible, and contribute to the fitness of that book as the instrument to develop the spiritual life of individual Christians, and of the Church at large throughout all generations. Every one knows that progress is the law of man's being. In childhood we are "pleased with a rattle and tickled with a straw," but when we come to mature years we all, to a greater or less extent, "put away childish things." We are not interested permanently in that which we perfectly know; continued enjoyment is secured only by the exercise of our growing powers, by the filling up of our enlarged capacities. If the Bible were a book which a man could fully comprehend at fifteen years of age it would not deeply interest him at thirty, and if its wealth and beauty were exhausted by the Church of one century, it would be neglected by the Church of the century that followed. "The very idea of such a book," that is, of a book fitted to cultivate and develop man's higher life, says an eloquent writer, "the very idea of such a book, which is for all men and for all the life of every man, is that it should have treasures which it does not give up at once; secrets which it yields slowly and only to those that are its intimates, with rich waving harvests on its surface, but with precious veins of metal hidden far below, and to be attained only by search and by labour. Nothing would be so fatal to its lasting influence, to the high purposes which it is meant to serve, as for any to be able to feel that he had used it up, that he had worked it through, that henceforward it had no fresh fields nor pastures new to which to invite him for to-morrow. Even where this did not utterly repel him, when he maintained the study of this book as a commanded duty, his chief delight and satisfaction in the handling of it would have departed, he no longer would draw water with joy from these wells of salvation, for they would be to him fresh springing fountains no more." But the Bible is exhaustless; it is a quarry in which men may always dig but which they cannot dig out; it is a mine of wisdom in which the most successful labourer knows that there are rich veins of precious ore still unopened. "Scripture cannot, as it were, be mapped," it has been well said, "or its contents catalogued; but after all our diligence to the end of our lives and to the end of the Church, it must be an unexplored and unsubdued land, with heights and valleys, forests and streams, on the right and left of our path and close about us, full of concealed wonders and choice treasures." The devout student of Scripture is like one who visits from year to year with increased inter-