LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00006029255


LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1800

# HISTORY

OF THE

# TRANSMISSION OF ANCIENT BOOKS

TO

# MODERN TIMES;

OR,

A CONCISE ACCOUNT OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF ANCIENT HISTORICAL WORKS ARE ASCERTAINED: WITH AN ESTIMATE OF THE COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE EVIDENCE USUALLY ADDUCED IN SUPPORT OF THE CLAIMS OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES.

BY ISAAC TAYLOR.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR B. J. HOLDSWORTH,
18, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.
1827.

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON

LONDON :

I. T. HINTON, WARWICK SQUARE.

DA
J24

# ADVERTISEMENT.

The credit of literature, the certainty of history, and the truth of religion, are all involved in the secure transmission of ancient books to modern times. Many of the facts connected with the history of this transmission are to be found, more or less distinctly mentioned, in every work in which the claims of the Holy Scriptures are advocated. But these facts are open to much misapprehension when brought together to subserve the purposes of a single argument. It is the specific design of this volume therefore to lay them before general readers apart from controversy, and as if no interests more important than those of literature were implicated in the result of the statements we have to make.

Nothing can be more equitable than that the genuineness and authenticity of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures should be judged of by the rules that are applied to other ancient books. And nothing is more likely to produce

a firm and intelligent conviction of the validity of the claims advanced by the Holy Scriptures, than clearly to understand the relative value of the evidence which supports them. To furnish the means therefore of instituting a comparison so just in itself and so necessary to a fair examination of the most important of all questions, is the design of the following pages.

As this volume makes no pretension to communicate information to those who are already conversant with matters of antiquity, literary or historical, whatever might seem recondite, or whatever is still involved in controversy, has been avoided. Nor has the author loaded his pages with numerous references, which, though easily amassed, would increase the size of the volume without being serviceable to the class of readers for whom he writes. No facts, he believes, are adduced which may not readily be substantiated by any one who has access to a library of moderate extent. To a few works not often met with in private collections, the author has explicitly acknowledged his obligations.

# CONTENTS.

# INTRODUCTION.

No one thinks of calling in question the principal facts of ancient history, or of disputing the authenticity of the works from which chiefly our knowledge of antiquity is derived. This confidence in the certainty of history is so firm, and is known to be in general so well founded, that it might seem unnecessary to adduce in form the various evidence on which it actually rests.

But on this subject, as well as upon some others, there often exists at the same time too much faith, and too little; for, from a want of acquaintance with the details on which a rational conviction of the genuineness and validity of ancient records may be founded, many persons, even though otherwise well informed, feel that they have hardly an alternative between a simple acceptance of the entire mass of ancient history, or an equally indiscriminate suspicion

of the whole. And when it happens that a particular fact is questioned, or the genuineness of some ancient book is argued, such persons, conscious that they are little familiar with the particulars of which the evidence on these subjects consists, and perceiving that the controversy involves a multiplicity of recondite and uninteresting researches; or that it turns upon the validity of minute criticisms, either recoil altogether from the argument, or accept an opinion, without inquiry, from that party on whose judgement they think they may most safely rely.

And certainly such controversies may, for the most part, very properly be left in the hands of critics and antiquarians, whose peculiar tastes and acquirements qualify them for investigations that must be utterly uninteresting to the mass of readers. Nor are the facts to which these controversies relate often of any importance to the general student of history; for they do not extensively affect the integrity of that department of literature to which they belong. But yet it must be allowed that the *principles* on which such questions are argued, and the common facts that are connected with the transmission of ancient literature to modern times, are in themselves highly important, and well deserving of more attention than they often receive. Nor are these facts, when separated

from particular controversies, at all complicated, abstruse, or difficult of apprehension. Indeed much of the information that bears upon the subject is in itself highly curious and interesting, as well as important.

Even in relation to those works of genius whose value consists in their intrinsic merits, and which would not be robbed of their beauties though discovered to be spurious, an assurance of their genuineness is felt by every reader to conduce greatly to the pleasure they impart. But a much stronger feeling naturally leads us to demand this assurance in the perusal of works which profess to have reality only for their matter.—Truth is the very subject of History.—Satisfactory evidence, therefore, of the integrity of its records may well be deemed an indispensable preliminary to a course of study in that department of knowledge.

Besides its peculiar propriety in connection with the study of history, the argument in support of the genuineness and authenticity of the existing remains of ancient literature is singularly fitted to afford a useful exercise to the reasoning faculties; and perhaps, better than any other subject, calls into combined action those powers of the mind that are too much separated by mathematical, physical, or legal pursuits, and which in the actual occasions of

common life can subserve our welfare only so far as they move in unison.

But reasons of still greater moment recommend the subject of the following pages to the attention of the reader; for every one, whether or not he is contented to admit without inquiry the authenticity of *profane* history, has the highest personal concern in the truth of that particular portion of ancient history with which the Christian religion is connected; and every one is bound to acquire a full conviction of the genuineness of the books in which its principles are contained. And as the facts on which this proof depends are of the same kind in profane, as well as in sacred literature, and as the same principles of evidence are applicable to all questions relating to the genuineness of ancient books, it is highly desirable that the proof of the genuineness of the Sacred Writings should be viewed in *its place*, as forming a part only of a general argument, which bears equally upon all the literary remains of antiquity. For it is only when so viewed that the comparative strength and completeness of the proof that belongs to this particular case can be duly estimated; and when exhibited in this light it will be seen that the integrity of the records of the Christian faith is substantiated by evidence in a tenfold proportion more various, copious, and conclusive, than that which can be adduced

in support of any other ancient writings. So that if the question had no other importance belonging to it than what may attach to a purely literary inquiry, or if only the strict justice of the case were regarded, the authenticity of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures would never be controverted till the entire body of classical literature had been proved to be spurious.

Many, perhaps most persons, in perusing works on the evidences of revealed religion, are apt to suppose that the sacred books only, or that these books more than any others, stand in need of laboured argumentation in support of their authenticity: while, in truth, these books, far less than any other ancient writings, need a careful investigation of their claims; for the proof that establishes them is on all points obvious and redundant. Indeed this very redundancy and variety of evidence, especially if it happens to be unskilfully adduced, may actually produce confusion and hesitancy, rather than affirmed conviction in unpractised minds. And this perplexity is perhaps increased by the very idea of the vast importance of the subject. Thus it may often happen that those very facts which, if compared with others of a similar kind, are susceptible of the most complete proof, are actually regarded with the most distrust.

The subject of the following pages constitutes what may be termed—the History of the Records of History; and our object is to trace the extant works of the ancient historians *retrogressively*, from modern times, up to the age to which they are usually attributed; and then to explain the grounds on which, under certain limitations, the contents of these works are admitted to be authentic and worthy of credit. This inquiry therefore consists of two perfectly distinct parts, of which the *first* relates to the antiquity, genuineness, and integrity of certain books, now extant; and the proposition to be established is this, namely, that such and such books were written in the age to which they are usually assigned, and by the authors to whom they are commonly attributed, and that they have not suffered material corruption in the course of transcription.

The *second* part of the inquiry relates to the degree of credit that is due to such of these ancient works as profess to be narratives of facts; and the proposition to be maintained is this, namely, that such or such an author wrote what he believed to be true, and that he possessed authentic information on the subject of which he treats. The proof in this case must be drawn from the style and character of the work itself; from the circumstances that attended its first publication; from the corro-

borative evidence of contemporary writers; and from the agreement of the narrative in particular instances with existing relics of antiquity.

Satisfactory evidence in support of the *first* proposition will prove that the works in question are not *forgeries*:—evidence establishing the *second*, will show that they are not *fictions*.

It is obvious that these propositions are not only distinct, but quite independent of each other:—one of them may be conclusively established, while the other is either disproved, or remains questionable. A book may contain a true narrative of events, though not written by the author, or in the age that have commonly been supposed. Or, on the other hand, it may undoubtedly be the production of the alleged author, but deserve little credit as a professed record of facts. Thus, for example, the Cyropædia is, on the best evidence, attributed to Xenophon; but there is little reason to suppose that it deserves to be considered as more than an historical romance:—the *genuineness* of the work is certain; but its authenticity as a history is very questionable. But the first of these propositions is more independent of the second, than the second can be of the first. For when the proof of the proper antiquity and genuineness of an historical work is clearly demon-

strated, it is seldom difficult to fix the degree of credit that is due to the author, or to discover those particular points on which there may be reason to suspect his veracity, to question the soundness of his judgment, or to doubt the accuracy of his information.

# CHAPTER I.

## ANTIQUITY AND GENUINENESS OF THE EXISTING REMAINS OF ANCIENT LITERATURE.

The antiquity and genuineness of the extant remains of ancient literature may be established by three lines of proof that are altogether independent of each other; and though, in any particular instance, one, or even two out of the three should be wanting, the remaining one may alone be perfectly conclusive:—when the three concur they present a redundant demonstration of the facts in question.

The *first* line of proof relates to the history of certain copies of a work, which are now in existence.

The *second*—traces the history of a work as it may be collected from the series of references made to it by succeeding writers.

The *third*—is drawn from the known history of the *language* in which the work is extant.

## I.

### HISTORY OF MANUSCRIPTS.

The antiquity and integrity of a work are, it is obvious, liable to no dispute so far as the

existence of any one copy of it can be traced back with certainty to the time of its first publication. If, for example, a manuscript of a work in the author's hand writing were still extant, and if the fact of its being such could be proved, our argument would be concluded, and all other evidence must be deemed superfluous. There are however few such unquestionable *autographs* to be found even of modern works, and none of any ancient one. Yet the circumstances attending the preservation and transmission of manuscripts are, in some instances, as we shall see, such as to prove the antiquity and genuineness of a work with little less certainty than as if the very first copy of it were in existence.

But before we enter into the particulars of this proof it should be mentioned, in conformity with the plan of the argument, which requires us to follow the order of time *retrogressively*, that it is unnecessary to trace the history of *manuscripts* later than the early part of the fifteenth century, when most of the classic authors passed through the press. For the invention of printing has served as well to ascertain, beyond doubt, the existence of books at certain dates, as to secure the text from interpolation and corruption. A printed book is not susceptible of subsequent interpolation or alteration by the *pen:* it bears also a date, and the issuing of different editions of the same

work from distant places, would render any falsification of date in one of them, or any material corruption of the text by an editor, an absurd and nugatory attempt. There are for example, now extant, printed copies of the history of the Peloponnesian war, dated "Venice, 1502;" other copies of an edition of the same work dated "Florence, 1506;" others, dated "Basil, 1540;" and others, printed within a few years of the same time at Paris and Vienna. On being compared with each other, these editions are found to agree *in the main;* and yet to disagree in many small variations of orthography, syntax, or expression; so as to prove that they were separately derived from different manuscripts, and not successively from each other. These printed editions, therefore, sufficiently prove the existence of the work in the fifteenth century; and also that the text of the modern editions has not been materially impaired or corrupted during the last four hundred years.

Let it be imagined, that there are no other means of ascertaining the antiquity and genuineness of the classic authors than such as may be collected from the history of existing manuscripts: and our object then will be to discover to what age they may clearly be traced; and to deduce from the facts of the case some inference relative to the length of time during which those works

have probably been under the process of transcription.

The date of ancient manuscripts may be ascertained by such means as the following.

1. Some manuscripts are known to have been preserved in the libraries where they are now found for several centuries:—for not only have they been mentioned in the catalogues of the depositories to which they belong, but accurately described by eminent scholars of succeeding ages; so that no doubt can remain of their identity. Or if they have changed hands, the particulars of the successive transfers are authentically recorded.

2. A large proportion of existing manuscripts are dated by the hand of the copyists, so as to leave no question as to the time when they were executed.

3. Many have marginal notes, added evidently by a later hand, which by some incidental allusion to persons, events, or particular customs, or by the use of peculiar forms of expression, indicate clearly the age of the notes, and therefore carry that of the original manuscript somewhat higher.

4. The remote antiquity of a manuscript is often established by the peculiar circumstance of its being discovered *beneath* another writing. These rewritten manuscripts—palimpsests, or rescripts, as they are termed, afford the most satisfactory proof of antiquity that can be

imagined. Parchment, always a costly material, was greatly enhanced in price when the paper manufactured from the papyrus of the Nile began to be scarce, and before the time when that formed from cotton, called charta bombycina, came into general use. At the same period, owing to the general decline of learning, the works of the classic authors fell into neglect. The copyists, therefore, and especially the monks, whose libraries often contained large collections of parchment books, availed themselves of the valuable material which they possessed, by erasing or washing out the original writing, and then substituted lives of the saints, romances, meditations, or such other inanities as suited the taste of the times. But often, the faithful skin, tenacious of its pristine honours, retained the traces of the original writing with sufficient distinctness to render it still legible. These rescripts therefore, present a double proof of the antiquity of the work which first occupied the parchment; for in most cases the date of the monkish writing is easily ascertained to be of the twelfth, or even the ninth century. The *first* writing therefore must be dated considerably higher; for it is much more probable that old, than that very recent books should have been selected for the purpose of erasure. Many invaluable manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures, and not a few precious fragments

of classic literature have been thus brought to light.

5. The age of a manuscript may often be ascertained, with little chance of error, by some such indications as the following:—the quality or appearance of the ink; the nature of the material; that is to say, whether it be soft leather, or parchment, or the papyrus of Egypt, or the bombycine paper; for these materials succeeded each other in common use at periods that are well known;—the peculiar form, size, and character of the writing; for a regular progression in the modes of writing may be traced by abundant evidence through every age from the remotest times;—the style of the ornaments or *illuminations*, as they are termed, often serves to indicate the age of the book which they decorate.

From such indications as these, more or less definite and certain, the ancient manuscripts now extant are assigned to various periods, extending from the sixteenth to the fourth century of the Christian era; or perhaps, in one or two instances, to the third, or second. Very few can claim an antiquity so high as the fourth century: but not a few are safely attributed to the seventh; and a great proportion of those extant were unquestionably executed in the tenth; and many belong to the following four hundred years. But it is to be observed that some manuscripts executed so late as the

thirteenth or even the fifteenth century afford clear internal evidence that, by a single remove only, the text they contain may claim a *real* antiquity, higher than that even of the oldest existing copy of the same work. For these older copies sometimes prove, by the peculiar nature of the corruptions which have crept into the text, that they have been derived through a long series of copies; while perhaps the text of the more modern manuscript possesses such a degree of purity and freedom from all the usual consequences of frequent transcription, as to make it manifest that the copy from which it was taken, was so ancient as not to be far distant from the time of the first publication of the work.

Most, if not all the royal and university libraries in Europe, as well as many private collections, contain great numbers of these literary relics of antiquity; and some of them could furnish manuscripts of nearly the entire body of ancient literature. There are few of the classic authors that are not still extant in *several* manuscript copies; and of some the existing copies are almost numberless.

Although all the larger ancient libraries, such, for example, as those of Alexandria, of Constantinople, of Athens, and of Rome, were destroyed by the fanaticism of barbarian conquerors; yet so extensive a diffusion of the most celebrated works had previously taken

place throughout the Roman empire, that all parts of Europe and Western Asia abounded with smaller collections, or with single works in the hands of private persons. When learning declined among the people, the religious houses became the chief receptacles of books; for in almost every such establishment there were individuals who still cultivated literature and the sciences with ardour; and who found no difficulty in buying up almost any quantity of this generally neglected property.

Happily for literature, religious houses were places of greater security than even the fortresses or palaces of kings, which by conquest or revolution were, from time to time, violently rent from their possessors; while these sacred seclusions were usually respected, even by the fiercest invaders. And through a long course of ages they were occupied by an order of men who succeeded each other in a more tranquil course of transition than has taken place, perhaps, in any other instance that can be named. The property of each establishment (and the literary property was always highly prized) passed down, from age to age, as if under the hand of a permanent proprietor, and was therefore subjected to fewer dispersions or destructions than the mutability of human affairs ordinarily permits.

Every church, and every convent and monastery had its library, its librarian, and other officers, employed in the conservation of the books.

Connected with the library was the *scriptorium*, where the elder monks employed themselves in making copies of such books as were falling into decay, or of such as there was still some demand for, out of their own establishment.

By these means the literature of more enlightened ages was preserved from extinction; and when learning revived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a large portion of those long hoarded volumes flowed into the collections of the munificent founders of libraries, and there, becoming known to the learned, were soon afterwards consigned to the immortal custody of the press.

The places in which the remains of ancient literature were preserved during the middle ages were too many, too distant from each other, and too little connected by any kind of intercourse, to admit of a combination or conspiracy for any supposed purposes of interpolation or corruption. Possessing therefore as we do, copies of the same author, some of which were drawn from the monasteries of England, others from those of Spain, and others collected in Egypt, Palestine, or Asia Minor, if, on comparing them, we find that they accord, except in variations of little moment, we have an incontestable proof of the care and integrity with which the business of transcription was generally conducted. For if the practice of mutila-

tion, interpolation, and corruption, had been to any considerable extent admitted, the existing remains of ancient authors could, after so long a time, have retained scarcely a trace of integrity or uniformity. From a licentious principle of transcription, operating through one or two thousand years, must have resulted, not the connected and consistent works we actually possess; but a heterogeneous mass of mangled fragments.

But if the general accordance of existing manuscripts attests the prevailing care, and even the scrupulousness of those through whose hands they passed, the specific nature of the diversities that do exist among the several copies of the same author serves to establish a fact which, if we did not know it by other means, it would be of the highest importance to prove: namely, that these works *had already descended through a long course of time, when the existing copies were executed.* This fact is especially apparent in the earlier Greek authors; for while some MSS. retain uniformly the peculiarities of the dialect in which the author wrote; in others, these peculiarities are merged in those *commoner* forms of the language which prevailed after the time of Alexander. These deviations in orthography or construction from the author's text were evidently made by copyists in compliance with the tastes of pur-

chasers in different countries; nor were they likely to have been effected by transcribers of *the middle ages*, when these books were no longer in use by readers to whom the language was vernacular, and to whom alone an accordance with the colloquial forms of the language could be a matter of importance.

Books in a dead language, intended for the use of the learned only, will never be accommodated to the colloquial fashions of an intermediate period. If, for example, in examining two editions of the poems of Chaucer, one of them is found to retain all the original peculiarities of orthography proper to the author's time, while in the other, those peculiarities are softened down into the forms adopted in the reign of Elizabeth, we should certainly attribute the edition to *that* period rather than suppose the corrections to have been made by a modern editor.

Again:—some MSS. present instances in which, when a passage is compared with the same in another copy, it is easy to perceive that an early transcriber, having fallen into an error, *more than one* succeeding transcriber has attempted a restoration of the genuine reading; for the *last* conjectural emendation has plainly been framed out of two or three prior corrections.

Thus the existing manuscripts of the classic

authors are traced, either by direct evidence, or by unquestionable inferences, very near to the age, and, in many instances, quite up to the age when these works were universally diffused, familiarly known, and incessantly quoted; and when, therefore, the history of each work may be easily and abundantly collected from the testimony of contemporary and succeeding authors. The various facts above alluded to serve to connect the literary remains of antiquity, now in our hands, with the period of their pristine existence.—We traverse the long era of general ignorance, that wide gulf which separates the intelligence and civilization of antiquity from the intelligence and civilization of modern times, and we land, as it were, upon the native soil of these monuments of mind, and once more find ourselves surrounded by that abundance of evidence which belongs to an advanced state of knowledge. We need not wish to trace the history of *manuscripts* further, than to the confines of that former world of learning and refinement.

Indeed we need not be solicitous to trace the history of these literary relics a step further than fairly into the midst of the dark ages. For if all external and correlative evidence were wanting, if nothing were known concerning the classic authors except that, such as they now are, *they were extant in the tenth cen-*

*tury*, enough would be known to make it abundantly certain that these works were the product of a different, and of a distant age. The men of those times might indeed be the transcribers and conservators, and perhaps even the admirers of Thucydides, of Xenophon, of Aristophanes, of Plato, of Virgil, of Cicero, of Horace, and of Tacitus; but assuredly they were not the *authors* of books such as those which bear these names. The living pictures of energy, wisdom, and liberty, which these monuments of taste and genius contain, were never imagined in the cells of a monastery, or composed in an age when nothing was to be seen abroad but ignorance, violence, and slavery; and nothing found within but a dreaming philosophy, and a degrading superstition. It is not the prerogative of the human mind, however great its native powers may be, to pass far beyond the bounds of the scene by which it is immediately surrounded, or to frame homogeneous images, which, in their elements, as well as in their adjuncts, belong to an order of things altogether unknown. To the genius of man it is given to imitate, to select, to refine, and to exalt, but not to create.

---

The general result of the facts brought toge-

ther in the preceding section is this, namely, that the books now extant, and usually attributed to the Greek and Roman writers, have, such as we find them, descended from a very remote age. But this general affirmation must always be understood to include an exception of those smaller omissions, additions, and alterations in the text, which have taken place either by design or inadvertency in the course of repeated transcriptions.

The actual amount and importance of these corruptions of the text of ancient authors is very likely to be much overrated by general readers, who, seeing the subject continually alluded to in critical works, and knowing that criticisms upon "various readings" often occupy a space five times exceeding that filled by the text, and that they not seldom become the subject of voluminous and angry controversies, must be led to suppose that questions upon which the learned are so long and so seriously employed cannot be otherwise than weighty and substantial. With a view of correcting this impression, so far as it may be erroneous, we shall now briefly explain the general nature, causes, and extent of these variations and corruptions.*

* In the appendix the reader may see some specimens of these "various readings."

By far the greater proportion of all various readings—perhaps nineteen out of twenty, are purely of a *verbal* kind, and such as can claim the attention of none but philologists and grammarians: a few deserve the notice of every reader of ancient literature; and a few demand the particular consideration of the student of history. Taken in a mass, the light in which they should be regarded is that of their furnishing a most significant and conclusive proof of the care, fidelity, and exactness with which the business of copying was ordinarily conducted. For nothing less than a high degree, both of technical correctness and of professional integrity on the part of those who practised this craft, could have conveyed the text of ancient authors through a period (in some instances) of two thousand years, with alterations so trivial as those which, for the most part, are found actually to have taken place.

When the discrepancies of manuscripts are such as materially to affect the sense of an author, upon some point of importance, and such therefore as to demand the exercise of discrimination on the part of the student of history, it becomes necessary to understand and to bear in mind what were probably the most common sources or occasions of these diversities. The following may be named as the most common causes of various readings.

1. Nothing is more probable than that authors who long survived the first publication of their works should, from time to time, issue revised copies; and each of these altered copies would, if the work were in continual request, and were widely diffused, become the parent of *a family* of copies. Thus, without any fault on the part of the transcribers, a considerable amount of diversities would be originated and perpetuated. A large proportion, perhaps, of those variations which occupy the diligence and acumen of editors and critics, and for the rectification of which so many learned conjectures are often hazarded, have, in fact, arisen from the author's own hand in revising the copies which, at intervals, he delivered to his amanuenses. The perpetual opportunity afforded for introducing corrections, when a book was continually in request, would be likely to encourage, in fastidious authors, the habit of frequent revision: meantime transcribers in distant countries might have no opportunity to collate the earlier with the later exemplars. This source of various readings seems to have been too little adverted to by critics; though it might serve to solve some perplexing questions relative to the genuineness of particular expressions or sentences which have fallen under suspicion from their non-existence in certain manuscripts.

2. Some errors would, of course, arise from the mere inattention, carelessness, or ignorance of transcribers; but fewer probably than may at first be imagined; for besides that those who spent their lives in this occupation would generally acquire a high degree of technical accuracy of eye, ear, and hand, and that correctness and legibility must have been the qualities upon which, principally, the marketable value of books depended; it is known that in the monasteries, from whence the greater part of all existing MSS. proceeded, there were persons, qualified by their superior learning for the task, whose office it was to revise every book that issued from the scriptorium. Errors of inadvertency must however have occurred. If the author to be transcribed was read by one person, while several wrote from his voice, the process would be open to the mistakes of the reader's eye, and of the writer's hand; but especially to those of the writer's ear, for words similar in sound might often be substituted one for the other. Instances of this sort are of frequent occurrence, and the knowledge of the probable cause usually suggests the proper correction. If the writer read for himself, he would be liable to mistake letters of similar shape, to mistake the *sense* by a wrong division of words in his manner of reading, in consequence of which he might involuntarily accom-

modate the orthography or syntax to the supposed sense. The frequent use of contractions in writing was a very common source of errors; for many of these abbreviations were extremely complicated, obscure, and ambiguous, so that an unskilful copyist was very likely to mistake one word for another. No parts of ancient books have suffered so much from errors of inadvertency as those which relate to *numbers;* for as one numeral letter was easily mistaken for another, and as neither the sense of the passage, nor the rules of orthography, nor syntax, suggested the genuine reading, when once an error had arisen, it would most often be perpetuated without remedy. It is, therefore, almost always unsafe to rest the stress of an argument upon any statement of numbers in ancient writers, unless some correlative computation confirms the reading of the text. Nothing can be more frivolous or unfair than to raise an objection against the veracity or accuracy of an historian, upon some apparent incompatibility in his statement of numbers. Difficulties of this sort it is much better to attribute at once to a corruption of the text, than to discuss with ill-spent assiduity.

3. The assumption of short marginal notes into the text, appears to have been a frequent source of various readings. When such notes supplied ellipses in the author's language, or

conduced much to the perspicuity of an obscure passage, the copyist would be very likely to incorporate the exegetical phrase, rather than that it should either be lost to the reader, or deform the margin.

4. Transcribers frequently thought themselves free to substitute modern for obsolete words or phrases; and, as we have before noticed, sometimes consulted the wishes of their customers by exchanging the forms of one dialect (of the Greek) for those of another; or, more often, for the common forms of the language. Alterations of this kind have often been the occasion of bringing authentic works under needless suspicion; for when the text has contained words or phrases which are known to belong to a later age than that of the supposed author, such incongruities have *seemed* to afford plain proofs of spuriousness.

5. Intentional omissions, interpolations, or alterations, were unquestionably sometimes made by transcribers. But so many are the means we possess for detecting such wilful corruptions, drawn from a comparison of different manuscripts, or from the incongruity of the interpolated passage, that there is perhaps, altogether, more probability that, from some accidental peculiarity of style, genuine passages of ancient authors should fall under suspicion,

than that any actually spurious portions should entirely escape it.

Of the above-mentioned causes of the existing various readings in the text of ancient authors, it should be remembered that the operation of the *first* was confined to the short term of the author's life; nor indeed, whatever may be the amount or importance of variations arising from *this* source, must they go to swell the number of *corruptions* of the text. The *second* source of variations was indeed open during the lapse of many centuries; yet it has always been held in check by the diligent collation of copies, on the part of industrious critics, from age to age: and a large proportion of errors, arising from mere inadvertency, are either so palpable as to suggest the means of their own correction, or so trivial as to merit no attention, except from those who charge themselves with the duties of an editor. There is, besides, reason to believe that not a few existing MSS. of the most celebrated authors, present a text that has passed through the process of transcription not oftener than once or twice; and that each time the copy has been executed with scrupulous exactness. Variations arising from the *third* and *fourth* sources, have perhaps occasioned to critics and editors more perplexity than those springing from any other cause; yet these dif-

ferences are rarely of any moment, so far as the sense of the author is concerned: they are only important when they tend to perplex the question of date or genuineness. Corruptions of the *fifth* class must be acknowledged materially to affect the credit and value of ancient literature, so far as there can be any reason to suspect their existence; and every diligent student of history will think the investigation of cases of this kind deserving of his attention.

## II.

### THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT WORKS, COLLECTED FROM THE QUOTATIONS AND REFERENCES OF CONTEMPORARY AND SUCCEEDING WRITERS.

Let it now be imagined, that the Greek and Latin authors are extant only in the printed editions—that is to say, that all the ancient MSS. have long since perished, and that the various facts that have been referred to in the preceding pages are unknown. Our business then would be, to collect from these works such a series of mutual references, as should both prove the identity of the works now extant with those so referred to; and also ascertain the relative places of the several writers in point of time.

A single reference, found in one author to the

works of another, who, in his turn, needs the same kind of authentication, may seem to be a fallacious, insufficient, and obscure kind of proof; for this reference or quotation may *possibly* be an interpolation, or the reference may be too slight or indefinite to make it certain that the work now extant is the same as that mentioned. But the validity of this kind of proof arises from its *amount*, its *multifariousness*, and its *incidental character*. For though a single and solitary testimony may be inconclusive, many hundred independent testimonies, all bearing upon the same point, are much more than sufficient to remove reasonable doubt; and if some of these references are slight and indefinite, others are full, particular, and complete. If some are formal and direct, and such therefore as might be supposed to have been inserted with a fraudulent design, others are altogether circuitous and incidental. If some have descended to us through the same channels, others are derived from sources as far removed as can be imagined from the possibility of collusion.

A work may happen to want this kind of evidence, and yet, on other grounds, possess a good claim to genuineness. But in fact almost all the existing remains of ancient literature are abundantly authenticated by the numerous and explicit quotations or descriptions that occur

in other works. And there are very few books that do not contain some direct or indirect allusions to other works; so that the remains of ancient literature, taken as a mass, contains within itself the proof of the authenticity of each part.

The nature of the case gives to this body of references a pyramidal form. In the most remote age it is, of course, of small amount; in the next it becomes much more ample and substantial; and in later periods, it spreads over the entire surface of literature.

The literature of the Greeks was national and original; they borrowed from their neighbours less in poetry, philosophy, and history, than in religion or the arts: their early writers were not, in the modern sense of the term, men of learning: their works were the impulses of original genius, and of the moving spirit of the times. The habit of literary allusion and quotation was not formed, nor was it congruous with this order of intellectual production; and yet the early Greek writers contain mutual references, which, if not numerous, are sufficient to establish and ascertain, in most instances, the genuineness of each.

The second period of Greek literature was, in the natural order of things, an era of learning, of criticism, and of imitation. The writers of this period, therefore, abound with references

of all kinds to their predecessors and contemporaries. A second age of literature generally holds up a mirror of the first. Erudition, amplitude, comprehension, method, labour, take place of spontaneous effort, and of intuitive taste. Commentators, compilers, and collectors abound; and the writers of such an age seem to perform the function of *caryatides* in the temple of learning; as if their only business was to sustain the pediment which chiefly attracts the admiration of spectators. Among writers of this class, therefore, we are to look for the most copious harvest of quotations; and in their pages we shall rarely fail to meet with evidence bearing upon any question of genuineness.

The Romans borrowed almost every thing but energy of character and practical good sense, from the Greeks. Their literature, from the first, was of a derived character; their writers added learning to their native genius; and their works, more or less, reflect the literature of their masters. Sufficiently ample allusions, therefore, to the most celebrated of the Greek authors, as well as to those of their countrymen, are found scattered through the Latin classics.

Both the Greek and Latin writers of later ages were well acquainted with the literature of brighter times; and have left in their works

ample means for bringing down the chain of references to the time of the decline of learning in Europe—to that time up to which we have already traced the history of existing manuscripts; so that the two lines of evidence unite in the midst of the dark ages.

The nature, extent, and validity of the evidence that may be derived from the mutual references of authors, will be best exhibited by a classification of its several kinds under the following heads:—

1. Literal quotations, whether the author from whom they are taken is named or not. These serve the double purpose of proving the existence of the work quoted in the time of the writer who makes the reference, and of identifying, and even of correcting the extant text. If, for example, in subsequent writers we find only a dozen or twenty sentences, taken from different parts of an earlier work, the verbal coincidence is sufficient to prove that the work, as it is now extant, is the same as that quoted. When such quotations are numerous and exact they afford the best means either of restoring the genuine reading of authors, or of judging of the comparative purity of different MSS. For frequently these *quotations* seem to have suffered less in the course of transcription than either the other parts of the work in which they

are found, or than that from which they are taken. The reason of this may readily be imagined.—Either the author himself quoted from a copy purer than any now extant, or the transcriber, meeting with a passage which he remembered to belong to a well-known work, consulted the original, of which he had a good copy, and the very circumstance of doing so would naturally induce somewhat more of care than usual in transcription.

2. We meet with incidental allusions, either to the words or sense of an author, sufficiently obvious to prove that the one writer was known to the other, and yet too incidental and remote to be attributed to an interpolation. In questions of apparent difficulty, such accidental references are often of conclusive force in proof of the existence of a work at a certain time. Among the ancient historians, there are many instances in which two writers, without mentioning each other, narrate the same facts with so many coincidences of method, details, embellishments, or reflections, as to leave no room to doubt that either both narratives were derived from the same source, or that the one was copied from the other. And if the one narrative has altogether the air of originality, and is in perfect accordance with the writer's style and spirit, the other writer must be held to be the

quoting party, and therefore establishes the prior existence of the work from which he borrows.

3. Most of the principal authors of antiquity have been explicitly mentioned, criticised, and described by later writers. Lists of their works have been given, with summaries of their contents; or they have been made the subjects of connected commentaries, by means of which every portion of the original work may be identified, and collated with existing copies. Books of this secondary class are commonly fraught with references to the entire circle of literature that was extant in the writer's time. There are also extant several works containing the lives of ancient authors, with accurate lists of their works. These biographical pieces have, at the same time, afforded a security against the production of spurious works, and given occasion to such attempts; for if some treatise, known to have been written by a celebrated author, is believed to have perished, an opportunity was presented for composing one which should correspond with the description given of it. But such spurious works must always be wanting in positive evidence, and will never fail to betray the imposition by some glaring inconsistencies in the style or matter. The lives of statesmen and warriors often contain such allusions to the writers of the same age,

as suffice to prove the time when they flourished. All the information we possess on this head is, in many instances, derived from allusions of this sort.

4. A fund of quotations is contained in some ancient treatises on particular subjects, in which all the authors who have handled the same topic are mentioned in the order of time.

5. Controversies, whether literary, political, or religious, have usually occasioned copious and extensive quotations from works of all classes; and on the spur of acrimonious disputation many obscure facts have been adduced, which, by some circuitous connection with other facts, have served to determine questions of literary history.

6. Among all the means of ascertaining the antiquity and genuineness of ancient books, none are more satisfactory or complete than those afforded by the existence of early translations. Indeed, if such translations can be proved to have been made near to the time assigned to the author of the original work—if they correspond, in the main, with the existing text—if they have descended to modern times through channels altogether independent of those which have conveyed the original work—and if, moreover, ancient translations of the same work, in *several languages*, are in existence, no kind of proof can be more perfect or

infallible: in such cases every other evidence might safely be dispensed with. Ancient translations serve also the important purpose of furnishing a criterion by which to judge of the comparative merits of MSS., and by which also to determine questions of supposed interpolation.

Though the genuineness of by far the greater part of ancient literature is established by a redundancy of testimonies, such as those here described, there will, of course, be some few instances of works which, though *probably genuine*, are so destitute of external proof, that they must remain under doubt; and there are also some few which, though *probably spurious*, have just so much plausible proof of genuineness, as serves to maintain them on the ground of controversy. The two together, therefore, will yield some number of disputable cases. The controversies that have actually been carried on relative to such doubtful works have served to show the exceedingly small chance which any actually spurious work can have of escaping suspicion and detection. And thus these discussions furnish, implicitly, the strongest grounds for relying upon the genuineness of those works against which even a captious and whimsical scepticism can maintain no plausible objection.

## III.

### PROOFS OF THE ANTIQUITY AND GENUINENESS OF ANCIENT BOOKS, DERIVED FROM THE HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGES IN WHICH THEY ARE EXTANT.

A language is at once the most complete, and the least fallible of all historical records. A poem or a history may have been forged, but not a language. The bare circumstance of its existence, though it may long have ceased to be colloquially extant, proves in substance all that history can communicate. If we possessed only a complete vocabulary of an ancient language, and were to digest the mass in accordance with an exact principle of synthesis, we should frame a model of the people who once used it, more perfect than any other monuments can furnish: and here we need fear no falsifications, no concealments, no flatteries, no exaggerations. The precise extent of knowledge and civilization to which a people have attained —nothing more, and nothing less, is marked out in the list of words of which they have made use.

A language, if we might use the comparison, may be called a *cast*, taken from the very life;

and it is one which represents the world of mind, as well as the world of matter. The common objects of nature—the peculiarities of climate—the works of art—the details of domestic life—political institutions—religious opinions and observances—philosophy, poetry, and art—every form and hue of the external world, and every modification of thought, find in language their representatives.

Having therefore a complete knowledge of any language—that is to say, of the words of which it consists, we possess a mass of facts by which to judge of the claims to authenticity of every work in which that language is embodied. And if, in addition to a knowledge of its vocabulary, the laws of its construction, and the nicest proprieties of syntax and of style are known; and if, moreover, the changes that have taken place from age to age in the senses of words, and in modes of expression, are ascertained, we have ample and exact *data* with which to compare every book that pretends to antiquity and genuineness. From a writer who employs his native language must be expected that he should conform to its standing usages; that he should bend, more or less, to the peculiarities of the age in which he writes; and that his vocabulary should fairly include that compass of words which his subject demands, and which the language affords.

It is true that such a degree of skill in a dead language may be acquired as may enable a writer to use it with so exact a propriety as shall deceive, or at least perplex, even the best scholars. But the difficulty of avoiding all phrases of later origin, and all modern senses of those words which are continually passing from a literal to a metaphorical meaning, is so great, as to leave the chances of escaping detection extremely small. Yet, as such a chance still remains within the range of possibility, this line of evidence cannot be reckoned absolutely conclusive, but must only be employed as subsidiary to the other evidence that bears upon questions of authenticity.

The minute changes which are continually taking place in most languages, and the history of which, when known, serves often to ascertain the date of ancient books, are of two kinds; namely, those which result necessarily from actual changes in the objects represented by words, and those which are mere changes in the use and proprieties of language itself.

Language being a mirror, reflecting all the communicable notions of the people who use it, every mutation in the condition of the people must bring with it either new terms, or new combinations of words; and as the particular circumstances which introduce such additions or alterations are often well known, their oc-

currence in an author may serve to fix the date of the book with little uncertainty.

There is also a progression in language itself, independent of any alterations in the objects represented by words. Whenever a vocabulary affords a choice of appellatives, even for immutable objects or notions, the caprices of conversation or of literature, affectation or excessive refinement, will, from time to time, occasion a new selection to be made. In all those terms, especially, which either bring with them ideas too familiar to accord with the proprieties of an elevated style, or which are in any degree offensive to delicacy, there will take place a continual, and sometimes even a rapid substitution of new for old phrases; not because the new are in themselves more dignified, or more pure than the old; but because, when first introduced, they are untainted by gross associations or vulgar use.

Every language, therefore, of which copious specimens are extant, and of which the progress is known, contains a latent history of the people through whose lips it has passed, and furnishes to the scholar a series of recondite dates, by means of which literary remains may almost with certainty be assigned to their proper age. This sort of evidence bears the same relation to the history of *books*, which

that derived from the successive changes known to have taken place in the mode of writing bears to the history of manuscripts. It is of a subsidiary kind, and from its very indirectness often deserves peculiar attention.

# CHAPTER II.

## FACTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE HISTORY OF MANUSCRIPTS.*

As our present inquiry relates to books, it will not of course include the ancient methods

* For the facts mentioned in this chapter I am indebted chiefly to the works of Father Montfaucon, of which the titles are as follows:—

PALÆOGRAPHIA GRÆCA, sive de ortu et progressu literarum Græcarum, et de variis omnium sæculorum scriptionis Græcæ generibus: itemque de abbreviationibus et de notis variarum artium ac disciplinarum.—Fol. Paris, 1708.

BIBLIOTHECA COISLINIANA, olim Segueriana: sive manuscriptorum omnium Græcorum quæ in ea continentur, accurata descriptio, ubi operum singulorum notitia datur, ætas cujusque manuscripti indicatur, vetustiorum specimina exhibentur, aliaque multa annotantur, quæ ad Palæographiam Græcam pertinent.—Fol. Paris, 1715.

The ANTIQUITY EXPLAINED, and the ITALIAN DIARY, of the same author, furnish similar information, to which I have added some particulars mentioned incidentally in the notes and prefaces of the editors of classic authors.

of engraving inscriptions upon marbles, metals, or precious stones. Yet it must be remembered that a knowledge of inscriptions is often highly important in furnishing a subsidiary and independent means of ascertaining the age of manuscripts by the character of the writing. For as there are extant almost innumerable specimens of writing upon the more durable materials, belonging to every age from the very earliest times, and as these inscriptions commonly contain, either an explicit date, or some allusion to public persons or events, they serve to determine, beyond doubt, the successive changes that have taken place in the form of letters, and the modes of writing.

## I.

### MATERIALS OF ANCIENT BOOKS.

No material for books has, perhaps, a higher claim to antiquity than the skin of the calf or goat tanned soft, and usually dyed red or yellow: the skins were generally connected in lengths, sometimes of a hundred feet, sufficient to contain an entire book, which then formed one roll or *volume*. These soft skins seem to have been more in use among the Jews and other Asiatics than among the people

of Europe. The copies of the law found in the synagogues are often of this kind: the most ancient manuscripts extant are some copies of the Pentateuch on rolls of leather.

Parchment—Pergamena, so called long after the time of its first use, from Pergamus, a city of Mysia, where the manufacture was improved and carried on to a great extent, is mentioned by Herodotus and Ctesias as a material which had been from time immemorial used for books: it has proved to be of all others, except that abovementioned, the most durable. The greater part of all manuscripts that are of higher antiquity than the sixth century are on parchment; as well as, generally, all carefully written and curiously decorated manuscripts of later ages. The palimpsests, mentioned in the preceding chapter, are usually parchments: "It often happened," says Montfaucon, "that from the scarcity of parchment, the copyists, having erased the writing of ancient books, wrote upon them anew: these rewritten parchments were called palimpsests—scraped a second time, and often the ancient work was one of far greater value than that to which it gave place: this we have on many occasions had opportunity to observe in the MSS. of the King's library, and in those of Italy. In some of these rescripts the first writing is so much obliterated as to be scarcely perceptible; while in others,

though not without much labour, it may still be read."

The practice, still followed in the east, of writing upon the leaves of trees, was common in the remotest ages. The leaves of the mallow or of the palm were most used for this purpose: they were sometimes wrought together into larger surfaces; but it is probable that this fragile and inconvenient material was only employed for ordinary purposes of business, letter writing, or the instruction of children.

The inner bark of the linden or teil tree, and perhaps of some others, called by the Romans *Liber*, by the Greeks *Biblos*,* was so generally used as a material for writing as to have given its name to a book in both languages. Tables of solid wood called *codices*, whence the term *codex* for a manuscript on any material, has passed into common use, were also employed, but chiefly for legal documents, on which account a system of laws came to be called a code. Leaves or tablets of lead or ivory are frequently mentioned by ancient authors as in common use for writing. But no material or preparation seems to have been so frequently employed on ordinary occasions as tablets co-

* The word biblos or byblos, was afterwards almost appropriated to books written upon the paper of Egypt.

vered with a thin coat of coloured wax, which was readily removed by an iron needle, called a *style;* and from which the writing was as readily effaced by the blunt end of the same instrument.

But during many ages the article most in use, and of which the consumption was so great as to form a principal branch of the commerce of the Mediterranean, was that manufactured from the papyrus of Egypt. Many manuscripts written upon this kind of paper in the sixth, and some even so early as the fourth century, are still extant. It formed the material of by far the larger proportion of all books from very early times till about the seventh or eighth century, when it gradually gave place to a still more convenient manufacture.

The papyrus, or Egyptian reed, grew in vast quantities in the stagnant pools formed by the inundations of the Nile. The plant consists of a single stem, rising sometimes to the height of ten cubits: this stem, gradually tapering from the root, supports a spreading tuft at its summit. The substance of the stem is fibrous, and the pith contains a sweet juice. Every part of this plant was put to some use by the Egyptians. The harder and lower part they formed into cups and other utensils; the upper part into staves, or the ribs of boats: the sweet pith was a common article of food; while the

fibrous part of the stem was manufactured into cloth, sails for ships, ropes, strings, shoes, baskets, wicks for lamps, and, especially, into paper. For this purpose the fibrous coats of the plant were peeled off, the whole length of the stem. One layer of fibres was then laid across another upon a block, and being moistened, the glutinous juice of the plant formed a cement, sufficiently strong to give coherence to the fibres; when greater solidity was required, a size made from bread or glue was employed. The two films being thus connected, were pressed, dried in the sun, beaten with a broad mallet, and then polished with a shell. This texture was cut into various sizes, according to the use for which it was intended, varying from thirteen to four finger's breadth, and of proportionate length.

By progressive improvements, especially in the hands of the Roman artists, this Egyptian paper was brought to a high degree of perfection. In later ages it was manufactured of considerable thickness, perfect whiteness, and an entire continuity and smoothness of surface. It was, however, at the best, so friable that when durability was required the copyists inserted a page of parchment between every five or six pages of the papyrus. Thus the firmness of the one substance defended the brittleness of the other; and great numbers of

books so constituted have resisted the accidents and decays of twelve centuries.

Three hundred years before the christian era the commerce in this article had extended over most parts of the civilized world; and long afterwards it continued to be a principal source of wealth to the Egyptians. But at length the invention of another manufacture, and the interruption of commerce occasioned by the possession of Egypt by the Saracens, banished the paper of Egypt from common use. Comparatively few manuscripts on this material are found of later date than the eighth or ninth century; though it continued to be occasionally used long afterwards.

The charta bombycina or cotton paper, often improperly called *silk* paper, was unquestionably manufactured in the east as early as the ninth century, possibly much earlier; and in the tenth it came into general use throughout Europe. This invention, not long afterwards, became still more available for general purposes by the substitution of old linen or cotton rags for the raw material; by which means both the price of the article was reduced, and the quality improved. The cotton paper manufactured in the ancient mode is still used in the east, and is a beautiful fabric.

From this brief account of the materials successively employed for books, it will be ob-

vious, that a knowledge of the changes which these several manufactures underwent will often serve, especially when employed in subservience to other evidence, to ascertain the age of manuscripts; or at least to furnish the means of detecting fabricated documents.

The preservation of books, framed as they are of materials so destructible, through a period of twelve, or even fifteen hundred years, is a fact which might seem almost incredible; especially as the decay of apparently more durable substances within a much shorter period, is continually presented to our notice. The massive walls of the monasteries of the middle ages are often seen prostrate, and fast mingling with the soil; while manuscripts penned within them, or perhaps when their stones were yet in the quarry, are still fair and perfect, glittering with their gold and silver, their cerulean and cinnabar.

But the materials of books, though destructible, are so far from being in themselves perishable that, while defended from positive injuries, they appear to suffer scarcely at all from any intrinsic principle of decay, or to be liable to any perceptible process of decomposition. "No one," says Father Mabillon,* "unless totally unacquainted with what relates to antiquity,

* De Re Diplomatica.

can call in question the great durability of parchments; since there are extant innumerable books, written on that material, in the seventh and sixth centuries; and some of a still more remote antiquity, by which all doubt on that subject might be removed. It may suffice here to mention the Virgil of the Vatican Library, which appears to be of more ancient date than the fourth century; and another in the King's Library little less ancient: also the Prudentius, in the same library, of equal age; to which you may add several, already mentioned, as the Psalter of S. Germanus, the Book of the Councils, and others, which are all of parchment. Many other instances I might name if it were proper to dwell upon a matter so well known to every one who is acquainted with antiquity.

"The paper of Egypt, being more frail and brittle, may seem to be open to greater doubt; yet there are not wanting books of great antiquity, by which its durability may be established. To go no further, there is in the Royal Library a very old codex written upon the philyra (or bark of the linden tree) containing the homilies of Avitus, I mean the copy from which the celebrated Jac. Sirmundus prepared his edition: we have also seen two other codices of the same material in the Petavian Library, containing some sermons of S. Augustine, which, in the opinion of the learned, are about

1100 years old. Of the same kind is that rare and very ancient codex in the Ambrosian Library, mutilated indeed, but consisting of many leaves of Egyptian paper, which contain some portions of the Jewish history of Josephus. These examples are sufficient to demonstrate the durability of the Egyptian paper in ancient books." The author then goes on to mention several instances of deeds and chartas written upon the paper of Egypt, still extant, though executed in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Books have owed their conservation, not merely to the durability of the material of which they were formed, but to the peculiarity of their being at once precious, and yet not (in periods of general ignorance) marketable articles; of inestimable value to a few, and absolutely worthless in the opinion of the multitude. They were also often indebted for their preservation in periods of disorder and violence to the sacredness of the roofs under which they were lodged.

## II.

### THE INSTRUMENTS OF WRITING.—INKS.

The instruments used for writing were, of course, adapted to the material on which they were to be employed. For writing upon the

brazen, leaden, or waxed tablets, above mentioned, a needle, called a style was used, the upper end of which, being smooth and flat, served to obliterate the marks on the tablet, as occasion might require. These styles were anciently most often formed of iron or brass; but afterwards of ivory, bone, or wood. Indeed a fatal use having been, on several occasions, made of these pointed weapons by angry partizans in the public courts, the use of iron styles was prohibited; Cæsar, when attacked by the conspirators, is said to have used his iron style as a dagger, and with it to have pierced the arm of one of them: and the story of the Christian schoolmaster, Cassianus, is well known, who is said to have been killed by his scholars, armed with their styles: other similar instances are recorded.

For the purpose of writing with ink, a calamus, formed generally from a reed of the Nile, was used. Persons of distinction often wrote with a calamus of silver. The use of quills seems to have been of ancient date; but long after the time when the fitness of the quill for the purpose of writing was known, the calamus of reed continued to be preferred. The scalpel, or knife for trimming the pen, the compasses, for measuring the distances of the lines, and the scissars, for cutting the paper, are always seen on the desk of the

writers in the figures which adorn many ancient manuscripts.

The ink most used by the ancients has been said, but on rather uncertain authority, to have consisted of the black liquor found in the cuttle fish. But it is evident from chemical analysis that an opaque ink, very different from the mere dye or stain used at present, was commonly employed by the transcribers of books. This opaque ink seems, like the China ink, to have been formed from the subtile soot of lamps in which the purest combustibles were burnt. The coal of ivory, or of the finer woods, powdered, was also in use; these or similar substances, mixed with gums, and diluted with acids, formed a pigment much more durable than modern ink; but less fluent, and much less adapted to a rapid and continuous movement of the pen.

"The ink," says Montfaucon, "which we see in the most ancient Greek manuscripts, has evidently lost much of its pristine blackness; yet neither has it become altogether yellow or faint; but is rather tawny or deep red; and often is not far from a vermilion. You may see this in many manuscripts of the fourth and following centuries, to the twelfth. In many I say; for some few, written with an ink more skilfully composed, have preserved their first blackness. This I have found,

though rarely, in some books which had at the end the date when the copy was made, reckoned, according to the manner of the Greeks, from the creation of the world. It has happened also, when the surface of the parchment, instead of being polished was spongy, that the ink has become yellow. In all the bombycine manuscripts, owing to the nature of the material, a separation of the parts of the ink has taken place; the grosser part standing on the surface, while the finer has penetrated the substance of the paper."

Inks of various colours, especially red, purple, and blue, and also gold and silver inks, were much used by the ancients: few manuscripts are destitute of some such ornamental diversities of colour, and many are splendidly recommended to the eye by these means. There was a purple ink, appropriated to the use of the emperors, and called the sacred encaustic; but a dye, not easily distinguished from that which appears upon some imperial chartas, is found very commonly in books. "And they must have had a nice sight who could so distinguish between the two, as to have detected a violation of the law on this subject. The subscription commonly seen at the end of Greek manuscripts, containing the name of the transcriber, with the year, month, day, indiction, and sometimes the hour, when

the copy was finished, are most often written in the imperial colour, especially in the times of the lower empire; or if not in that ink, in one that cannot now be distinguished from it."

The titles of chapters were frequently written alternately in red and cerulean: marginal notes, most often in the latter colour. Books of a later date often have all the capitals of a bright green. The Greeks, more frequently than the Romans, used golden ink; and many Greek MSS. are extant in which, not the titles and capitals only, but whole pages, are elegantly written in a pigment of the precious metals: but it was rather upon ecclesiastical than profane literature that this honour was bestowed. The works of the Fathers, chiefly, were so adorned, and sometimes the Gospels: there is extant a copy of the four Evangelists, written upon purple parchment, in letters of gold throughout. The practice of using gold and silver inks was so common, that the manufacture of them became a distinct business; and those who were skilled in this sort of writing seldom followed any other employment than that of inserting the titles, capitals, or emphatic words, in the copies executed by inferior hands. Several curious recipes for the preparation of the precious pigments are given by the later Greek writers.

Those who have been long accustomed to inspect and examine ancient manuscripts acquire a certain tact in judging of the age of a book from "the condition of the ink, its colour and composition," which cannot be explained to others, and for the exercise of which no rules can be laid down. But in cases where a fraud is suspected, this nice habit of the eye often at once detects the imposition. It is perhaps more practicable to give to a picture than to a manuscript, the hue of antiquity by artificial means.

## III.

### CHANGES INTRODUCED FROM AGE TO AGE IN THE FORMS OF LETTERS, AND THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF WRITING.

An exact uniformity in the shapes of letters, and in the general appearance of writing, is hardly maintained for so long a period as fifty years in any language, especially if it be widely diffused. Within that space of time, the fashion of our own typography has undergone several changes, so perceptible as to afford a tolerably certain criterion of the date of books. No person, for example, who is familiar with books, would find it difficult, merely from the character

of the type, to discriminate the age of works published at the several periods of 1775, 1800, and 1825. On similar grounds a knowledge of the successive changes introduced by caprice, accident, or a regard to convenience, in the ancient modes of writing, affords an almost certain means of determining the age of manuscripts.

The knowledge requisite for the exercise of this discrimination is derived, in part, from incidental allusions to modes of writing which occur in some ancient authors; but principally from an extensive comparison of manuscripts themselves, and from a comparison of manuscripts with inscriptions upon marbles, brazen tablets, or coins. From these sources may be collected a sufficiently precise idea of the character of writing prevailing in each century, from the second to the fifteenth of the Christian era.

The oldest Greek manuscripts extant differ little in the form of the letters, or the general appearance of the writing, from the inscriptions that belong to the corresponding periods. They are written in capitals, called uncials, without division of words, and without marks of accentuation or punctuation. About the seventh century, the custom of affixing the accents and aspirates appears to have been introduced; at the same time a greater degree of

precision was observed in the formation of the letters, and in the directness and parallelism of the lines. To these improvements was added a change in the form of those letters which most impeded the rapid movement of the pen.

In the eighth and ninth centuries a mode of writing which had been long before practised by notaries and by the secretaries of public persons, was adopted by the transcribers of books. This was a kind of running hand, those who invented, or who most used it, being called tachygraphoi—swift writers. To adapt the Greek letters to the purposes of public business and common life, the square forms had been changed for curves; and uprights for slopes: and while a radical resemblance to the primitive character was preserved, facility and freedom were obtained.

The uncial character was not, however, altogether abandoned by the copyists; but modifications were introduced with a view to obtain greater facility: for the unconnected and upright squares formerly used, seemed still more operose in execution after the running-hand had been adopted. The copyists of the eighth century introduced the practice of commencing books or chapters with a letter of large size, which they usually distinguished by grotesque decorations, somewhat in the manner seen in the printed books of the sixteenth century.

Those who gained their living by copying books, found so great an advantage in the adoption of the tachygraphic character, that they presently sought to improve it by every device that might favour the uninterrupted movement of the pen; not content with joining the letters of each word, they combined them in forms that often bore little resemblance to the component characters. The books of the tenth and following centuries abound with these contractions, abbreviations, and symbols. Many entire words of common occurrence were indicated by single turns of the pen. A great part of these contractions were adopted by the first printers, and many of them continued in use till a very recent date.

The manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are distinguished by a degeneracy in the mode of writing, and a growing abuse of the principle of celerity and facility. To these symptoms of the influence of a mercantile motive, put into activity by an increasing demand for books, may be added the practice of discharging the writing of old parchments, which most extensively prevailed at the same period. "A vast number of books," says Montfaucon, "of this sort, written upon erased parchments, are to be met with, executed in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. In most instances, the first writing is utterly oblite-

rated; yet the marks of the erasure are evident. Thus, in a MS. above described, not a letter, not a point, of the ancient writing remains; but on many of the leaves may be discerned ruled lines, either transverse or perpendicular, which having been deeply impressed upon the parchment, could not be effaced; so that these old lines often cross the new writing. Other pages of the same MS. present no such indications; the leaves having probably been taken from different books. In another MS., executed in the year 1186, though the ancient writing is generally obliterated, in a few places, if closely inspected, the ends of the letters may be perceived. In a word, if all the books of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are examined, there will appear to be almost as many written upon erased, as upon new parchments. I am of opinion, that many authors extant in the time of Photius, and even in that of Porphyrogenitus, were utterly destroyed by the prevalence of this pernicious practice. This plague, as it may be termed, spread its devastation among ancient books first in the twelfth century, and continued its ravages during the thirteenth and fourteenth. The same thing is rarely to be observed in bombycine manuscripts: I have met only with one book of this material in which the first writing had been erased, and a second induced. The Greek writers of these

times ordinarily erased a better work for the sake of substituting a worse; either one of their own inane productions, or those works of which there is no scarcity among MSS. The extremest ignorance must certainly have pervaded Greece in those times, when what related to ancient history or to polite learning was not valued at a straw by the writers, who rather than purchase new parchment, destroyed, without scruple, ancient books."

A progression similar to that which took place in Greek writing, distinguishes manuscripts in the Latin language, and affords a like criterion of antiquity. Several MSS. believed, on good evidence, to belong to the third and fourth centuries, are extant, which present a style of writing nearly allied to that which appears in the inscriptions of the same period. But the uncial character gave place to the small letter at an earlier date among the Roman, than among the Greek copyists; yet they seem to have availed themselves of the change in a much less degree for the purposes of celerity. Indeed, there is little more of continuity, or of abbreviation in the small, than in the large character.. Towards the tenth century the Latin scribes adopted a square and heavy character, similar to that which is seen in legal documents. This wide and full-faced letter was so much exaggerated by the writers

of the fourteenth century, as almost to blacken the page with its massiveness. Still, a handsome regularity, and a fair degree of legibility were maintained. There are, indeed, some manuscripts of this period extant which, for mathematical exactness and beauty, might almost compare with printed books.

Nothing less, it is obvious, than a long continued and extensive examination of ancient manuscripts, can confer such a degree of skill in discriminations of this kind, as might authorize the formation of an opinion in a case of difficulty. Yet the mere inspection of a small number of these relics of antiquity, may convince any one of the reality and distinctness of those progressive changes in the modes of writing upon which such discriminations are founded. The architecture of different periods is not more characteristic of the ages to which it belongs, than is the style of writing in manuscripts; nor is there less certainty in determining questions of antiquity in the one case, than in the other. Particular instances may perplex or deceive the best informed and the most acute observers; but the greater number of cases admit of no question.

## IV.

### FORM OF ANCIENT BOOKS, THEIR ILLUMINATIONS, &c.

The mode of compacting the sheets of their books remained the same among the Greeks during a long course of time: little, therefore, pertinent to our argument, is to be gathered on this head. The sheets were folded three or four together, and separately stitched: these parcels were then connected nearly in the same mode as is at present practised. Books were covered with linen, silk, or leather.

The page was sometimes undivided; sometimes it contained two, and in a few instances of very ancient MSS., three columns. A peculiarity which attracts the eye in many Greek manuscripts, consists in the occurrence of capitals on the margin, some way in advance of the line to which they belong; and this capital sometimes happens to be the middle letter of a word. For when a sentence finishes in the middle of a line, the initial of the next is not distinguished, that honour being conferred upon the incipient letter of the next line; thus—

THEGREEKSENTERING
THEREGIONOFTHEMA
CRONESFORMEDANAL
LIANCEWITHTHEM.AS
T HEPLEDGEOFTHEIR
FAITHTHEBARBARIANS
GAVEASPEAR.

The Greeks, especially in the earliest times, divided their compositions into verses, or such short portions of sentences as we mark by a comma, each verse occupying a line; and the number of these verses is often set down at the beginning or end of a book. The numbers of the verses were sometimes placed in the margin.

Much intricacy and difficulty attends the subject of ancient punctuation; nor could any satisfactory account of the rules and exceptions that have been gathered from existing MSS. be given, which should subserve the intention of this work. Generally speaking, though with frequent exceptions, the most ancient books have no separation of words, or punctuation of any kind; others have a separation of words, but no punctuation; in some, every word is separated from the following one by a point. In manuscripts of later date are found a regular punctuation, and marks of accentuation. These circumstances enter into the estimate

when the antiquity of a book is under inquiry; but the rules to be observed in considering them cannot be otherwise than recondite and intricate.

Few ancient books are altogether destitute of decorations; and many are splendidly adorned with pictorial ornaments. These consist either of flowery initials, grotesque cyphers, portraits, or even historical compositions. Sometimes diagrams, explanatory of the subjects mentioned by the author, are placed on the margin. Books written for the use of royal persons, or dignified ecclesiastics, usually contain the effigies of the proprietor, often attended by his family, and by some allegorical or celestial minister; while the humble scribe, in monkish attire, kneels and presents the book to his patron.

These illuminations, as they are called, almost always exhibit some costume of the times, or some peculiarity, which serves to mark the age of the manuscript. Indeed a fund of antiquarian information relative to the middle ages has been collected from this source. Many of these pictured books exhibit a high degree of executive talent in the artist, yet labouring under the restraints of a barbarous taste.

## V.

### THE COPYISTS.

It is a matter of some importance to know by what class of persons, chiefly, the business of copying books was practised; and it gives no little support to our confidence in the genuineness of existing manuscripts to find that individuals of all ranks, influenced by very different motives, devoted themselves to this employment. From the earliest times in which literature flourished, there were, in all the principal cities of Greece and its colonies, great numbers of professional scribes; that is to say, persons who gained their subsistence by copying books. Labourers of this class, it may well be supposed, aimed, in general, at nothing but to gain custom by the fairness and fidelity of their copies. But it appears to have been not uncommon for persons of rank and leisure to occupy themselves in this employment.* Some created their own libraries by transcribing every book that came in their way. To persons of a sedate temper, or who by indisposition were confined to their homes, this occupation

* "In the list of copyists we find the names of the nobles of the Constantinopolitan empire."—MONTFAUCON.

may be imagined to have been highly agreeable. Nor was it a wasted labour to those who had leisure at command; since the high price of books made the collection of a library by purchase scarcely practicable, except to the most opulent.

The influence of Christianity extended the practice of private copying; for motives of piety stimulated the industry of very many in the good work of multiplying the sacred books, and the works of the Christian writers. The highest dignitaries of the church, and princes even, thought themselves well employed in transcribing the gospels and epistles, the psalter, or the homilies or meditations of the fathers; nor were the classic authors, as we shall see, neglected by these gratuitous copyists.

But from the third or fourth century downwards, the religious houses were the chief sources of books, and the monks were almost the only copyists. The employment was better suited than any other that can be imagined, to the monastic life. The mental and bodily inertness which the spirit and rules of the conventual orders tended to produce, when conjoined, in individuals, with some measure of native industry, would find precisely that field of lethargic assiduity which it needed, in the business of copying books. In many monasteries this employment formed the chief occupation of the

inmates; and by few, if any, was it altogether neglected.

Various appellations occur in the Greek authors, by which the several orders of writers were designated. Among the scribes or notaries attached to the service of public persons, there were always some eminent for the rapidity with which they wrote, and who therefore bore the title of *tachygraphoi*, or swift writers. But those who followed the business of copying books, in which legibility was the chief excellence, generally called themselves *kalligraphoi*, or fair writers. Yet these appellations are often used interchangeably.

The copyists usually subscribed their names at the end of every book, with the year in which it was executed; to which they often added the name of the reigning emperor,* and, occasionally, some notice of the signal events of their times. From these incidental references much important historical information

* Sometimes, though rarely, the name of the patriarch of Constantinople, for the time being, is added to the subscription of the copyist. MSS. written in Sicily, bear the name of its kings; those executed in the East, mention the Arabian or Turkish princes. The Greeks of the early ages commonly dated from the creation of the world, which they placed 5508 years before Christ. Sometimes they reckoned time from the death of Alexander the Great; sometimes from the accession of Philip Aridæus; sometimes from the accession of Diocletian.

has sometimes been collected. These signatures are usually, without doubt, written by the hand of the transcriber of the book.

Besides the signature of the copyist, the margins of many manuscripts contain notes—often very trivial or absurd, from the hands of successive proprietors of the book; each accompanied with some date or reference to persons or events, serving to fix the time of the annotator, and, by inference, proving the antiquity of the manuscript. In a few instances the transcribers copied the subscription of the transcribers of the book from which they wrote; and if that former subscription bears a date, we have a double indication of antiquity.

The fidelity of the copyists, and the genuineness and integrity of ancient manuscripts, are warmly and learnedly defended by the laborious Father Mabillon, on every occasion throughout his celebrated work, *De Re Diplomatica.** In a supplement he thus argues:—

* De Re Diplomatica, Libri vi. in quibus quidquid ad veterum instrumentorum antiquitatem, materiam, scripturam et stilum; quidquid ad sigilla, monogrammata, subscriptiones ac notas chronologicas; quidquid inde ad antiquariam, historicam, forensemque disciplinam pertinet, explicatur et illustratur. Op. et Stud. Joh. Mabillon.—Fol. Paris, 1709.

The leading motive which impelled the indefatigable author to the prosecution of the researches of which this work gives the result, seems to have been the desire to establish the genuineness

"Before I conclude this supplement, I think it may be proper to say something concerning the integrity and authority of ancient books, which some persons dispute. For assuredly, if the genuineness of charters and public deeds is doubted, the authority of ancient manuscripts in general is also called in question; and, if these doubts can be substantiated, it will appear that those who employ themselves in collating the printed editions of the fathers, or other sacred books, with ancient manuscripts, spend their labour in vain. And hence, too, we must believe, contrary to the opinion of all learned persons, who think the world greatly indebted to the labours of the monks in transcribing books, that they toiled to no good purpose. Such persons, to give colour to their opinion, affirm that the existing ancient manuscripts were executed by ignorant men, whose blunders are easily perceived by the learned; and on this prejudice they have founded the decision, that manuscripts having been written, for the most part, by unskilful hands, and de-

and integrity of ecclesiastical, and especially of monastic charters. In the course of his inquiries, he brings forward a vast variety and amount of information relating to the modes of writing practised in the monasteries, and in the courts of the French kings, during the middle ages. These facts are of course directly available in every argument that relates to the genuineness and antiquity of existing manuscripts in the *Latin* language.

rived many from one, are of little avail in understanding or restoring an author.

"But if this principle were admitted, our confidence in the printed editions, as well as in the ancient MSS. must fall to the ground. Neither the acts of councils, the works of the fathers, nor the Holy Scriptures, would retain any authority. For whence, I ask, proceeded the printed editions, both of profane and sacred writers? were they not derived from ancient manuscripts? If, therefore, these are of no authority, those can have none; and thus, by this paradoxical opinion, the foundations, both of literature and of religion, are torn up. And, on this principle, there would be no force in the argument used by S. Augustine against the Manichæans, who calumniously affirmed every place of Holy Scripture, by which their errors might be confuted, to be falsified and corrupted. But Augustine, in reply to Faustus, reminds him that whoever had first attempted such a corruption of the Scriptures, would have immediately been confuted by a multitude of ancient manuscripts, which were in the hands of all Christians.

"On this principle the labours of the fathers, Jerom, Augustine, and others, in collating ancient books with modern copies, would have been fruitless. In vain the appeals of councils to such authorities for the determination

of controversies; in vain the costs and cares of princes and kings in collecting manuscripts from the remotest countries. And if the case be thus, the Vatican, the Florentine, the Ambrosian, and the royal (French) libraries are nothing better than useless heaps of parchment. And it was to no purpose that the Roman pontifs and the kings of France, as well as other prelates and princes, sent learned men to the farthest parts of the east to obtain ancient books in the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and other languages. And then the ancient transcribers must lose their credit, and especially the monks, who devoted themselves entirely to the copying of books; such were the disciples of S. Martin, among whom, according to Sulpicius, no art but that of writing was practised. For they thought they could not be better employed than while at once edifying themselves in the continual perusal of the Holy Scriptures, and spreading the precepts of the Lord far and wide by their pens. Of this opinion was the pious Guigo: 'As we cannot preach the word with our lips,' says he, 'let us do it with our hands: for as many books as we transcribe, so many heralds of the truth do we send forth.' And thus also Peter the venerable, writing to Gislebert, a recluse, exhorts him to diligence in this exercise: 'For so you may become a silent preacher

of the divine word; and though your tongue be mute, your hand will speak aloud in the ears of many people. And in future times, after your death, the fruit of your toils will remain, even as long as these books shall endure.'

"But it is affirmed that the manuscripts we possess were, for the most part, written by unlearned persons; and are they therefore undeserving of regard? In the first place I deny that they were generally written by the unlearned. Certainly the blessed martyr Pamphilus who wrote out the greater part of the works of Origen was not unlearned; nor was Jerome unlearned, nor Hilarius. Of Fulgentius, the celebrated bishop (of Ruspa) it is reported that he was famed for his skill in the writer's art. The same praise was earned by those holy men Lucianus, Philoromus, and Marcellus; also by the blessed Plato and Theophanus. The blessed Marcella the younger, as says Jerome, wrote quickly and without fault. The venerable Bede, Radbert, Raban and others among our learned men, discharged the function of copyists, not of their own works only, but of those of others.

"And even if the greater part of manuscripts were written by unlearned men, they are not therefore to be accounted unskilful copyists, provided they read and copied accu-

rately. Experience proves every day that those compositors are not the most correct who understand Latin, but that such are commonly the most faulty; especially in attempting to correct that which they do not properly understand, and which those who know nothing of the language set up accurately. But let it be granted that the copyists were unlearned: we know that the printed editions are not derived from a single copy, but from a comparison of many: the most careless scribe does not always err, and where he does, his mistakes are amended by the collation of the copies of others.

"In a word, there were in all well ordered churches and monasteries, not only learned writers who transcribed books themselves, but learned correctors, who compared the copies made by others with the originals, and amended whatever was erroneous. 'A devoted scribe,' says Trithemius, 'when he has carefully written a book, compares it anew with the original, and subjects it to a diligent revision.' Many instances might be adduced in proof of this revision and correction of manuscripts. One or two may suffice. In the library of the Vatican there is a manuscript written towards the close of the fifth, or in the beginning of the sixth century, containing the books of S. Hilary on the Trinity, which has been col-

lated with an older copy by some studious person, as appears by a note at the end. Again, Paul Warnefrid, deacon and monk of Casina, having copied the epistles of Gregory the Great, sent the book to Adalhard, abbot of Corbeia, requesting him to revise the copy; but the abbot fearing lest he might alter the genuine text of so learned a doctor, contented himself with placing a mark in the margin at every place where there appeared to him to be an error.

"But it is affirmed that there are many faulty, and many falsified manuscripts. That there are not a few faulty books I grant; but that there are many falsified manuscripts I stoutly deny. The difference between a *faulty* and a *falsified* book is essential: of the former sort are those which, from the mistakes or negligence of the writer, contain some blemishes: of the latter kind are those which have been wilfully corrupted. Many indeed may appear to be falsified which are not so really, nor are even faulty. Which I may thus explain.—It could not but happen that the copyists, in transcribing large works, should sometimes wander from the true reading—putting perhaps one word for another. When they observed their error they might rectify it in two ways, either by erasing the word and inserting the genuine reading; or, by insert-

ing the true word beneath the other, which they marked with points. Now some persons, not understanding this, or purposely putting upon it an unfavourable construction, found upon the first case a charge of *erasure*, and in the second, place both words in the text of the author, though the pointed word ought to be omitted. Sometimes also it happened that words or initials written in vermilion, having grown pale, were renewed by a later hand, which alterations have occasioned an unfounded suspicion of falsification."

The pens of the monastic scribes were chiefly occupied in transcribing religious books, the Holy Scriptures, the works of the Fathers, the lives of saints, books of meditations and prayers; yet the classic authors were not neglected. Montfaucon in his Italian Diary adduces a letter from a monk of the monastery of Pomposia, in which the library of the establishment is described.—"The Monastery of Pomposia has been much improved since the time of its founder Guido [about 1025] renowned for sanctity. Incited by the fame of his piety great numbers assumed the sacred habit in his church; marquesses, counts, and sons of noblemen have laid aside the pomps and pleasures of the world to follow there the duties of religion. Among these my master Jerome, afterwards abbot, was trained up from his

earliest years to follow the monastic life, and made great proficiency in grammar and logic. He, for the edification of the brotherhood, set himself to collect the works of learned men; in order that amidst the variety, all might meet with the information they sought for. Bonus—good—both in name and life, who was first a hermit and afterwards a monk, was his librarian, a man esteemed by all as a perfect scholar, and so eager in the acquisition of books that he purchased all he met with, however indistinctly they were written; for the abbot determined to have them all transcribed for his library: and by his care almost all are now copied. He is ever inquisitive for religious books of all kinds, so that the church of Pomposia is become the most renowned in Italy. Thus by the goodness of God our thirst of knowledge is increased by knowing. Indeed the abbot's desire of enriching his church with these treasures is unbounded. But envious persons may ask, Why does this reverend abbot place the heathen authors, the histories of tyrants, and such books, among theological works? To this we answer in the words of the apostle, that there are vessels of clay as well as of gold. By these means the tastes of all men are excited to study—the intention of the gentile writings is the same as that of the Scriptures, to give us

a contempt for the world and secular greatness."

By these or similar apologies those of the monks, and there were some such in most houses, who possessed taste and learning, excused, to the more devout, the attention they bestowed upon the works of the profane authors. That the Greek and Latin classics were known and studied during what are called the dark ages, is capable of abundant proof, as we shall presently see. And those whose taste led them to be conversant with these writings took care by the labours of their hands to perpetuate the works they most admired.

## VI.

### THE PLACES MOST CELEBRATED FOR THE TRANSCRIPTION OF BOOKS.

During the flourishing period of the Grecian republics, that is, from the defeat of Xerxes to the time of Alexander the Great, many of the Greek colonies almost equalled, or even surpassed the mother country in wealth, refinement, and intelligence. In the neighbouring islands of the Ægean sea—in Asia Minor—in Italy and in Sicily, literature and philoso-

phy were almost as eagerly cultivated as at Athens. Many of the most distinguished writers and philosophers were natives of the colonies; and if Greece itself was the principal seat of learning, and the fountain head of books, whatever was there produced quickly found its way to distant settlements; for to every city along the shores of the Mediterranean and the Euxine there was a standing exportation of books: in many of these remote cities libraries were collected, and the business of copying carried on.

After the time of Alexander, Grecian literature flourished no where so conspicuously as at Alexandria in Egypt, under the auspices of the Ptolemies. Here all the sects of philosophy were established; numerous schools were opened; and, for the advancement of learning, a library was collected, which was supposed at one time to have contained 700,000 volumes in all languages. Connected with the library there were extensive offices, in which the business of transcribing books was carried on to a great extent, and with every possible advantage which royal munificence on the one hand, and learned assiduity on the other, could ensure. Nor did the literary fame of Alexandria decline under the Roman emperors. Domitian, as Suetonius reports, sent scribes to Alexandria to copy books for the restoration of

libraries that had been destroyed by fire. And it seems to have been for some centuries afterwards a common practice for those who wished to form a library, to maintain copyists at Alexandria. The conquest of Egypt by the Saracens, A. D. 640, who burned the Alexandrian Library, banished learning for a time from that, as from other countries which they occupied.

Attalus and his successors, the kings of Pergamus, were great encouragers of learning: and the copying of books was carried on to so great an extent in their capital as to occasion the establishment of a vast manufacture of prepared skins, as mentioned above, which long continued to be a considerable article of commerce. The library of the kings of Pergamus is said to have consisted of 200,000 books.

During upwards of a thousand years, from the reign of Constantine, till the fall of Constantinople, that city was the principal seat of learning, and the chief source of books. The Byzantine historians are frequent in their praises of the munificence of the emperors in purchasing books, and in providing for their reproduction. The manuscripts executed at Constantinople are often remarkable for the beauty of the writing, and the splendour of the decorations. Besides the imperial

libraries, the churches and monasteries of the city were all enriched with collections, more or less extensive, and in all of them the business of transcription was constantly and actively pursued.

A large number of existing manuscripts are dated from the monasteries of the country immediately surrounding the metropolis of the eastern empire; and many from those of Asia Minor, from the islands of the Ægean Sea, and especially from Cyprus.

But no spot was more famed for the production of books than Mount Atho—the lofty promontory which stretches from the Macedonian coast far into the Ægean Sea. The heights and the sides of this mountain were almost covered with religious houses, rendered by art and nature, and by the universal opinion of the sanctity of the monks of the 'holy mountain,' so secure that neither the meditations nor employments of the recluses were disturbed by the approach of violence. The chief occupation of the inmates of these establishments is affirmed to have been the transcription of books, of which each monastery boasted a large collection.

Many extant MSS. prove that the copying of books was practised extensively during the middle ages in the monasteries of the Morea, in those of the islands of Eubœa and of Crete.

This latter island seems indeed to have been a place of refuge for men of learning during the latter periods of the eastern empire, who found in its monasteries, shelter and the means of subsistence.

Fifty religious establishments in Calabria and the kingdom of Naples are mentioned, from which proceeded a large number of the books afterwards collected in the libraries of Rome, Florence, Venice and Milan.

In the monasteries of western Europe also, especially in those of the British Islands, this system of copying was carried on. Though there were considerable diversities in the rules and practices of the monks of different orders, the elements of the monastic life were in all orders and in every country the same; and generally speaking wherever there were monasteries there was a manufacture of books. Yet in some houses these labours of the pen were much more worthily directed than in others. For while the monks of one monastery employed themselves in transcribing nothing but missals, legends, or romances, others enriched their libraries with splendid copies of the fathers of the church, and of the Holy Scriptures; and some, though a smaller number, took care to reproduce such of the classic authors as they might be acquainted with.

The monastic institutions seemed as if framed for the special purpose of transmitting the remains of ancient literature, sacred and profane, through a period in which, except for so extraordinary a provision, they must inevitably have perished. In every country a large class of the community being freed from the necessity of labour, and excluded from active employments, was constrained to seek the means of allaying the tortures of listlessness; and nothing could answer this purpose better than the transcription of books. And to this employment, congruous as it was to the physical habits induced by an inert mode of life, and compatible with the observance of a round of unvarying formalities, was attached an opinion of meritoriousness which served to animate the diligence of the labourer. "This book, copied by M. N. for the benefit of his soul, was finished in the year, &c.—may the Lord think upon him." Such are the subscriptions of many of the manuscripts of the middle ages.

"Meanwhile along the cloister's painted side,
The monks—each bending low upon his book
With head on hand reclined—their studies plied;
Forbid to parley, or in front to look,
Lengthways their regulated seats they took;
The strutting prior gazed with pompous mien,
And wakeful tongue, prepared with prompt rebuke,

If monk asleep in sheltering hood was seen;
He wary often peeped beneath that russet screen.

" Hard by, against the window's adverse light,
Where desks were wont in length of row to stand,
The gowned artificers inclined to write;
The pen of silver glistened in the hand;
Some on their fingers rhyming Latin scanned;
Some textile gold from balls unwinding drew,
And on strained velvet stately portraits planned;
Here arms, there faces shone in embrio view,
At last to glittering life the total figures grew."

FOSBROOKE.

## CHAPTER III.

INDICATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE OF ANCIENT LITERATURE FROM THE DECLINE OF LEARNING IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY, TO ITS RESTORATION IN THE FIFTEENTH.

General epithets usually carry with them a meaning that oversteps the bounds of truth: we hear of 'the dark ages'—'the period of intellectual night'—'the season of winter in the history of man'—and we are apt to imagine that during the times thus designated the human mind was utterly palsied, and all learning extinct. But in fact throughout that period, reason, though misdirected, was not sleeping, philosophy was rather bewildered than inert; and learning was immured but not lost.

In no part of the period that extends from the reign of Justinian, when Greek and Roman literature every where lay open to the light of day, till the fall of the Constantinopolitan empire and the revival of learning in the fifteenth century, do we entirely lose the traces

even of the classic authors, much less of sacred literature; for in each of the intervening ages, and in every quarter of Europe, there were writers whose works, being still extant, give abundant evidence of their acquaintance with most of the principal authors of more remote times.

Under the vague impression created by certain loose modes of speaking relative to the deep and universal ignorance said to have prevailed in Europe during a space of seven hundred years, the existence of a large number of manuscripts of the classic authors, executed *during those very ages of ignorance*, presents a great apparent difficulty: for, from what motive, it may be asked, or for whose use were these works transcribed so frequently as to be found in all parts of Europe on the revival of learning in the fifteenth century? The facts now to be mentioned will, to some extent, furnish a solution of this question, by proving that in the west and in the east, during these times of general intellectual lethargy, there were not a few individuals who cultivated polite literature with ardour, and to whom the possession and preservation of books was a matter of lively interest. The names about to be mentioned, as every one will recollect, bear but a small proportion to the whole number that might be adduced: it is

sufficient for our purpose to refer to one or two writers in each century.

The sixth century of the Christian era abounds with the names of writers in all departments of literature; many of whose works, having descended to modern times, present ample evidence of the undiminished diffusion of general learning. Among these may be mentioned Procopius, the historian of the reign of Justinian;—Agathias, who continued the same history;—Boethius, author of the last specimen of pure latinity—a poem on 'the Consolation of Philosophy;'—Hesychius, the lexicographer;—Proclus, a platonic philosopher;—Fulgentius, and Cassiodorus, ecclesiastical writers;—Priscianus, a grammarian;—Gildas the wise, an Anglo Saxon historian;—Evagrius Scholasticus, an ecclesiastical historian;—Simplicius, the commentator upon Aristotle and Epictetus;—Marcellinus Ammianus, an historian and critic, whose works contain copious references to ancient literature;—and Stephen of Byzantium, a grammarian and geographer.

The seventh century produced fewer writers than perhaps any other period that can be named within the compass of history. The only names that here claim to be mentioned are those of Theophylact of Simocatta, who has left a history of the reign of the emperor Mauritius, not very highly esteemed indeed, but not deficient in

allusions to the literature of the times; and Isidore, an ecclesiastical writer.

In the latter part of the seventh, and in the first years of the eighth century flourished our countryman Bede, whose writings, when it is remembered that he passed his life in the seclusion of a remote monastery,* afford the most ample proof of the general diffusion of books of all classes in that age. Bede displays extensive if not profound learning, the whole of which he acquired from the sources ordinarily within the reach of monastic students. "Bede," says Sixtus Senensis,† a learned Italian of the sixteenth century, "was a man of universal learning, not less skilled in the Greek than in the Latin tongue; a poet, a rhetorician, an historian, an astronomer, an arithmetician, a master of chronology and geography, a philosopher, and a theologian. So much was he admired in his own times that it became a proverbial saying among the learned, 'A man born in the farthest corner of the earth has compassed the earth with the line of his genius.' His works, even during his life, and while he continued to write, were, by the ordinance of the British bishops, appointed to be read in churches."

* St. Peter and St. Paul, on the Tyne, in the Diocese of Durham.

† Quoted by Blount, in his "Censura Celebriorum Authorum."

"He was," says Bale, bishop of Ossory (1532) "versed in the profane authors beyond any man of that age. Physics and general learning he derived, not from turbid streams, but from the pure fountains; that is, from the chief Greek and Latin authors. Indeed, there is hardly any thing of value in the compass of ancient literature, that is not to be met with in Bede, although he never travelled beyond the limits of his native land." "Our Bede," says Pits, in his Lives of English Writers (1590) "was a man so universally learned, that Europe has hardly produced his equal."

Alcuin, one of Bede's disciples, did much by his learning and influence at the court of Charlemagne,* to aid the endeavours of that enlightened prince for the restoration of litera-

* Charlemagne, himself tolerably well acquainted with Latin and Greek authors, zealously laboured to restore learning in the church, and out of it. He invited learned men to his court, employed them in making Latin translations of the Greek classics and of the Fathers, founded public schools, and introduced regulations tending to make some degree of education indispensable to all who held office in the church. Of the professors invited by Charlemagne to his court as many came from the British Isles as from Italy. "We must not forget," says Muratori, "the praise of Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, which, in the study of the liberal arts, surpassed all other nations of the West in those times, nor omit to record the diligence of the monks of those countries who roused and maintained the glory of letters which every where else was languishing or fallen."

ture. He was skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages; gave lectures in all the sciences, and founded many public schools. His works, historical and theological, are in part extant, and justify the reputation he enjoyed. In his letters he familiarly quotes Virgil, Ovid, and Horace.

Raban Maurus, a disciple of Alcuin, and created archbishop of Mentz in 847, before his elevation taught theology, philosophy, poetry, and rhetoric at Paris, in the school established there by the Anglo-Saxon monks. "A man," says Trithemius, abbot of Spanheim, (1500) "well versed in the Holy Scriptures, and thoroughly learned in profane literature, as his writings abundantly testify." He enriched the monastery of Fulda, on the Rhine, where he received his early education, with a large collection of books; and there he founded a school. Two hundred and seventy monks belonged to the establishment, who were trained by him in every branch of learning. Disciples flocked to him from all countries, and he reared for the church a great number of ministers well furnished for its service. He died 856.

One of the first professors in the university of Oxford, founded (or restored) by King Alfred,* was John Scot; he afterwards went

* Before the Danish incursions, the English monasteries and

**into France, where he was honourably entertained at the court of Charles the bald, at whose request he translated some Greek authors into Latin: but these versions, in which a literal adherence to the original was observed, were scarcely intelligible to those for whose use they were intended. His writings display, however, much various learning; they were condemned as heretical by the church on account of his opinions relative to the eucharist. Being driven from France by the order of the pope, he took refuge in an English monastery; but there, at the instigation of the monks, he, like Cassianus, was killed by his scholars, with their iron styles.**

churches abounded with men of learning; but these establishments being broken up, and the monks dispersed by the rude invaders, literature and the arts became almost extinct in the country. Alfred, himself a man of learning, and a various writer, effected much towards their restoration, by the re-establishment of the ruined monasteries—the erection of many new ones—the endowment of schools—the foundation of lectureships at Oxford, and by the diffusion of his own writings, which, even if he had not been a king, would have perpetuated his name. In the list of his works appear several translations of Latin authors into Saxon: there is also a translation of Æsop's Fables, said to have been rendered by him from the Greek. It is also affirmed by William of Malmsbury, that Alfred translated the Old and New Testaments into the vernacular tongue. These literary labours, carried on amidst the cares of government, are striking proofs of an ardent and intelligent zeal for the diffusion of knowledge among his people at large.

Contemporary with the last-named writer was Photius, with whom no author of that, or of several succeeding ages, can be compared: his works hold up a mirror of all the literature extant in his times. Photius, educated for secular employments, and for some time engaged in the service of Michael III. was by that emperor forcibly invested with the dignity of patriarch of Constantinople (858) in the room of Ignatius. That he might pass regularly to this elevation, he was made monk, reader, subdeacon, deacon, priest, and patriarch, in the course of six days. From the office thus violently assumed, he was, with little ceremony, expelled by Basilius, the successor of Michael. Once again, at the head of a band of soldiers, he possessed himself of the patriarchate, of which, by similar means, he was at length finally deprived; after which he retired to a monastery, where he ended his days. Before his elevation, he had composed the most useful and the most celebrated of his works, the *Myriobiblion*, which contains, in the form of criticisms, analyses, and extracts, an account of upwards of 270 works. This treasury of learning preserves many valuable fragments from authors whose works have perished, and affords the most important aid in ascertaining the genuineness of many of the remains of ancient literature.

Eutychius, an Egyptian physician, and afterwards (933) patriarch of Alexandria, wrote a universal history, still extant, which, though it contains numerous fables, exhibits the various learning of the author. Though so large a number of existing manuscripts were executed in the tenth century, as to prove that a great degree of activity in the reproduction of books prevailed in that age, it presents the names of few authors whose works have descended to modern times.

The eleventh century is much richer in distinguished names, of which it may suffice to mention the following:—

Avicenna, an Arabian physician and Mahometan doctor, reduced the science of medicine to a systematic form, including almost every thing that had been written on the subject by his predecessors: he was well versed in Greek literature, and is said to have committed Aristotle's metaphysics to memory. *

* The first conquests of the Saracens in Asia, Africa, and Spain, during the seventh and eighth centuries, were almost fatal to the interests of learning. But no sooner had they well established their power in the conquered countries, than the caliphs sought to rekindle the light of knowledge. During two or three centuries, Bagdat in the east, and Cordova in the west, were the seats, not only of splendid monarchies, but of science, general learning, and great refinement. It was, however, chiefly the mathematical and physical sciences that were cultivated by the Arabians. They

Michael Psellus, a Greek physician, and a monk, wrote upon subjects of all kinds: "There was no science which he did not either illustrate by his comments, or abridge, or reduce to a better method."—"A man celebrated for the extent of his acquirements in divine and human learning, as his many works, both printed and in manuscript, evince."

Lanfranc, by birth an Italian, was created archbishop of Canterbury by William of Normandy; he promoted learning among the clergy, and was himself esteemed universally accomplished in the literature extant in that age.

Anselm, the disciple and successor of Lanfranc in the see of Canterbury, was also in repute for general learning.

The works of Suidas, a Byzantine monk, like those of Photius, contain a store of various learning, singularly useful on points of criticism and literary history. The lexicon of this writer, besides the definition of words, contains accounts of ancient authors of all classes, and many quotations from works that have since perished.

possessed imperfect and corrupted translations of several of the Greek authors, especially of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Euclid, and Dioscorides; and had some general, though imperfect, acquaintance with the historians. Some of the Latin translations, made by the order of Charlemagne, were derived from these Arabian versions.

Sigebert, a monk of Brabant, has left a chronicle of events from A.D. 381 to his own times, 1112, and a work containing the lives of illustrious men. "A man," says Trithemius, "profoundly versed in the Scriptures from his youth, and inferior to none of his countrymen in general learning."

The name of Anna Comnena, daughter of the emperor Alexius Comnenus, and wife of Nicephorus Bryennius, distinguishes the early part of the twelfth century. She wrote an elegant and eloquent history of her father's reign. This work displays not only a masculine understanding, but an extensive acquaintance with literature and the sciences.

England produced during this century several eminent writers, accomplished in the learning of the age. Such were William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntington, Geoffery of Monmouth, and Joseph of Exeter, author of two Latin poems, on the Trojan war, and the war of Antioch, or the Crusade; and, somewhat later, Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, reckoned the most learned man of western Europe in those times.

Eustathius, archbishop of Thessalonica, flourished towards the close of the twelfth century. His commentaries on Homer, besides serving to elucidate the Greek language by many important criticisms, drawn from sources that

have since been lost, contain, like the works of Photius and Suidas, innumerable references to the Greek classics, and thus furnish the means of ascertaining the integrity and genuineness of the text of those authors as they are now extant.

John and Isaac Tzetzes, critics and grammarians of Constantinople, are still consulted as commentators upon some of the Greek authors.

Robert Grostest (Greathead) bishop of Lincoln, was famed for his skill in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, as well as for the bold resistance he made to the exactions of the popes upon the English church. Camden says of him that "he was a man versed in the languages and in general literature in a degree scarcely credible, when the age in which he lived is considered; a terrible reprover of the pope, the adviser of his king (Henry III.), and a lover of truth."

Matthew Paris, the English historian, displays in his works an acquaintance with ancient literature, as well as a familiar knowledge of the antiquities of his native country. Like the prelate last named, Paris vigorously opposed the papal usurpations in England; nor did he less courageously reprove vice in every rank at home. His reputation as a man of learning and virtue enabled him to effect a considerable

reformation in many of the English monasteries. He died 1259.

The works of Albert, called the Great, a Dominican friar, and afterwards, in 1260, bishop of Ratisbon, fill one-and-twenty volumes. They are chiefly on the physical sciences, but include a sort of encyclopedia of the learning of the age. "A man of wonderful erudition, to whom few things in theological science, and hardly any in secular learning, were unknown. On account of the extent and variety of his acquirements, sirnamed 'the Great'—an honour conferred upon no other learned man during life." Albert of Ratisbon, like Roger Bacon, incurred among his contemporaries the suspicion of being a magician. Learning, in the restricted sense of the term, or the knowledge of books, though possessed by a comparatively small class of persons, was too frequent to excite wonder or envy; but science, or a knowledge of nature, acquired, not from Aristotle, but from experiment, was so rare, that it seldom failed to engender both, and to occasion dangerous accusations of a correspondence with infernal agents.

The revival of learning is usually reckoned to have commenced in the fifteenth century; but in the fourteenth a decided advancement in almost every department of literature is per-

ceptible. That a gross and degrading ignorance was wearing away from the bulk of the community in several parts of Europe, and that the educated classes were acquiring a better taste and more expanded views, needs no other evidence than is presented in the works of Dante, of Petrarch, of Boccatio, of Chaucer, and of Gower, which were not merely produced in that period, but extensively read and admired.

Fewer instances than those given above might suffice to prove, that at no part of that tract of time, which extends from the decline of learning in the sixth century to its revival in the fifteenth, was there a total extinction of the knowledge of ancient literature. This proof, it must be acknowledged, is much more complete in reference to the Greek than to the Latin authors; it is also vastly more ample in relation to ecclesiastical and sacred, than to profane literature. Of all the manuscripts extant executed in the middle ages, perhaps nineteen in twenty are of the former class. The continuance of the eastern empire till the middle of the fifteenth century, afforded an uninterrupted protection to Greek learning during those periods when western Europe was laid waste by the Gothic nations. Yet even those devastations were never universal in their extent or in their kind. If Italy were in ashes, the Bri-

tish islands were secure. And if cities were sacked and burned, and castles, palaces, and cathedrals pillaged and overthrown, hundreds of religious houses, in strong or secluded situations, remained untouched; or if occasionally subjected to the violence of armies, or the exactions of conquerors, they more often lost their chests, their cups and their salvers, than their books.

Learning and the sciences can flourish and advance only where there are the means of a wide and quick diffusion of the fruits of intellectual labour: but they may exist under the total absence of such means. This was the case in Europe during the middle ages. Knowledge rested with the few whom the inward fire of native genius constrained to pursue it: and these few were insulated from each other; often unknown beyond the walls within which they spent their lives; and often secluded by their tastes even from their fellows of the same society.

In every myriad of the human race, take the number where or when we may, there will be found one or two individuals born for thought; and if the vocation of nature is not always stronger than every obstacle, it is, for the most part, strong enough to overcome such as are of ordinary magnitude. Those who are thus endowed with the appetite for knowledge, will

certainly follow the impulse, if the means of its acquirement are directly presented to them in early life. Now these means were every where interspersed among the nations of Europe during the middle ages by the monastic system; and it may be questioned whether there were not then greater chances for drawing within the pale of learning the native mind of every district, than are afforded by the present constitution of society. The religious houses were so thickly scattered through every country, and the continual draught from the population for the maintenance of the numbers of their inmates * was so great, that they must have taken up many more than the gifted individuals of every neighbourhood; but such individuals would almost certainly be included within the enlistment. For whenever a youth displayed a fondness for learning, nothing better could be done for him, whether he was the son of a peasant or a noble, than to devote him to the service of the church.†

In the very darkest times, learning carried

* A standing rule of the monastic establishments enjoined that the original number of each congregation should be maintained.

† The monasteries usually contained schools for the youth of their vicinities. From these schools the superiors of the house had the opportunity of selecting any who gave promise of intelligence.

with it a degree of reputation, and the heads of religious houses generally wished to decorate their establishments with some particles of the honours of erudition, as well as to recommend them by the possession of relics; and many were eagerly ambitious to enhance the literary celebrity of their communities. With these views it would be their policy to afford the necessary means and encouragement to those who seemed most likely to support the credit of the society.*

Independently therefore of direct evidence, there would be reason to believe that most of the monasteries and conventual churches at all times included an individual or two whose tastes led him to devote his life to study, and who would become the sedulous guardian and conservator of the books of the house, directing the labours of the less intelligent brethren

* "The education of a monk, at least in the fourteenth century, consisted of church music and the primary sciences, grammar, logic, and philosophy—obviously that of Aristotle. Some French and Latin must also have been included; for these were the languages the monks were enjoined to speak on public occasions. They were afterwards sent to Oxford or Paris to learn theology. Such indeed was the encouragement held out to literature, that in a provincial chapter of abbots and priors of the Benedictine order, held at Northampton A.D. 1343, men of letters and masters of arts were invited to become monks, by a promise of exemption from all daily services."—FOSBROOKE.

in the work of transcribing such as were falling into decay.

In the estimation of minds ruled by the love of books, even if capable of discriminating the precious from the worthless—the worthless, by a principle of association, partakes, to a large degree, of the respect that belongs in reason only to what is intrinsically valuable. A book, whatever be its subject or its merits, is viewed with a fond covetousness by those whose passion it is to love books. This feeling must have been strong indeed, in times when books were hardly to be purchased, and when their ideal value included a recollection of the toil of transcription. The spirit of the ruling superstition, which taught the attachment of an incalculable importance to objects intrinsically worthless, must also have favoured an undistinguishing reverence for books. We need not then be surprised to find that works of all classes, though altogether unsuited to the taste of the times, were reproduced from age to age by the monkish copyists.

While, therefore, all taste for instruction disappeared from the face of society; while kings and nobles were often as ignorant as artisans and peasants; while even the great body of the clergy retained only some tattered shreds of learning, the productions of brighter ages were hoarded and perpetuated, and were

accessible to the few whose intellectual ardour carried them beyond the standard of their times.

---

More than half a century before the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, the learned men of that city, apprehensive of the approaching fall of the empire, began to emigrate into Italy, where they opened schools, and became the preceptors of princes and the guides of the public taste, which they directed towards the study of the classic writers of Greece and Rome. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, filled the Italian cities with these learned strangers.

The Italians needed only to receive this kind of direction, and the means of study; for they had for some time been placed under those peculiar circumstances, which have ever proved the most favourable to the advancement of the human mind. A number of independent states were crowded upon a narrow space, throughout which the same language, yet diversified by dialects, was spoken. The energy, the rivalry, the munificence that accompany commerce, kept the whole mass of

society in movement; while the influence of a superstition, which sought to recommend itself by every embellishment that the genius of man can devise or execute, overruled the debasing tendency of successful trade, and directed the ambition of princely merchants towards objects more noble and intellectual than wealth usually selects as the means of distinction.

The formation of libraries, suggested or favoured by the importation of manuscripts from Constantinople, was the means not only of making more widely known the works of the Greek authors, which had never fallen into oblivion, but of prompting those researches which issued in the recovery of the Latin writers, many of whom had long been forgotten. The appetite for books being quickened, neither cost nor labour were spared in their accumulation; and learned men were despatched in all directions throughout Europe, western Asia, and Africa, to collect manuscripts. In the course of a few years, most of the authors now known were brought together in the libraries of Rome, Naples, Venice, Florence, Milan, Vienna, and Paris, where they were laid open to those who were best qualified to give them to the world.

Thus aided by the munificence and zeal of princes and popes, the scholars of the fifteenth

century sedulously applied themselves to the discovery, restoration and publication of the remains of Greek and Roman literature, and in the course of sixty or eighty years most of the works now known were committed to the press. Since that time some few discoveries have been made; but the principal improvements in classic literature of later date have consisted in the emendation of the text of ancient authors by a more extensive collation of manuscripts than the first editors possessed the means of instituting. This restoration of the remains of ancient works to their pristine integrity has not been effected like that of a dilapidated building or a mutilated statue, by the addition of new materials in an imagined conformity with the plan and taste of the original work, but by the industrious collection and replacement of the very particles of which it at first consisted.

The invention of printing, which virtually exempts books from the operation of the law that subjects all things mundane to the decays of time, has greatly promoted also the process of their renovation; for by giving to the issue of an edition of a standard work a degree of importance several hundred times greater than what belonged to the transcription of a single copy, it has called for the employment of a proportionately larger amount of learning,

diligence, and caution in the work of revision; and then, by enabling each successive editor to avail himself of the labours of all his predecessors, the advantages belonging to the concentration of many minds upon the same subject have been secured.

Since the fifteenth century therefore, the lapse of time, instead of gradually impairing and corrupting the literary remains of antiquity, has incessantly contributed to their renovation. Indeed it may be affirmed that, in relation to the amount, exactitude, and certainty of our knowledge, we are not receding from remote ages, but constantly approaching towards them. In a thousand instances what was unknown, or doubtful, or imperfect, or corrupted, at the commencement of the fifteenth century, is ascertained, restored, and completed in the nineteenth. The history and the literature of Greece and Rome, long inhumed in the monasteries, were, at the period of their re-appearance, liable to uncertainties and to suspicions which not all the learning and industry of that vigorous age were able to dispel. But the learning and industry of the four centuries that have since elapsed, constantly directed towards the same objects, and constantly accumulating a various mass of evidence, have left very few questions of literary antiquity open to controversy.

Having then, by the mention of some leading facts, traced the remains of ancient literature to the time when they passed to the press, their history is no longer obscure or questionable; nor are they any more liable to the hazards of extinction from political changes or from the decline of learning in this or that country; for unless a universal devastation should take its course at once over every region of the civilized world, the body of literature now extant can neither perish nor suffer corruption. A temple, a statue, a picture, or a gem is but *one*, and however durable may be the material, it continually decays and is always destructible. The touch of the sculptor moulders from the chiselled surface, and the time will come when every monument of his genius shall have crumbled in the dust, and when his fame, lost from the marble, shall live only in the works of the poets and historians who were his contemporaries.

Thus it is that the *written* records of distant ages, with the knowledge of which the intellectual, moral, and political well-being of mankind is inseparably connected, are secured from extinction by a mode of conservation less liable to extensive hazards than any other that can be imagined. If man is cut off from the knowledge of the past, he becomes indif-

ferent to the future, and sinks into the rudeness and ferocity of the sensual life. The redundant amplitude, therefore, of the means by which this knowledge is preserved only bears a due proportion to the importance of the consequences that depend upon its perpetuation.

## CHAPTER IV.

### METHODS OF ASCERTAINING THE CREDIBILITY OF ANCIENT HISTORICAL WORKS.

The facts referred to in the preceding chapters belong in common to ancient books of all classes, and they tend to prove that the works of the Greek and Roman writers—poets, dramatists, philosophers, critics, and historians, which issued from the press in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may, by various and independent evidence, be traced up to the age in which they are commonly supposed to have been written.

Our attention is now to be confined to those ancient works which are professedly historical, and our object will be to ascertain on what grounds, and with what limitations, such works deserve our confidence as narratives of facts.

The same mode of inquiry which common sense suggests on the most ordinary occa-

sions, when we are called upon to estimate the value of testimony, is applicable to all cases of the like nature. Nor can the importance of the consequences that may be involved in the issue of the investigation render it invalid or unsatisfactory.

In some lesser particulars the modes of estimating oral and written testimony must differ; but in substance the heads of inquiry will be the same. In the case with which we have now to do—the credibility of the testimony of the ancient historians, it is natural to consider the following points:—

1. The moral and intellectual character and qualifications of the writers;

2. The means of information they possessed;

3. The time and circumstances of the first publication of the work;

4. The exceptions it may be necessary to make to their testimony on particular points, arising either from the peculiar nature of the facts affirmed, or the apparent influence of prejudice—personal or national; and,

5. The agreement of the narratives in question with evidence derived from other and independent sources.

In judging then of the authenticity of an historical work we have, in the first place, to form an estimate of the writer's moral and intellectual character and qualifications.

If the personal integrity of an historian has happened to be put to the proof by well known and remarkable events, in which he was concerned, the reader whose own character qualifies him to feel the force of such proof will ask for no better ground of confidence; for such errors in matters of fact as an honest historian may be liable to, will seldom be of much importance. But even if no such proof of a writer's personal integrity exists—if the circumstances of his life are altogether unknown, almost every writer leaves in his works sufficient indications of his moral dispositions. The characteristics of honesty are distinct and conspicuous enough to secure the confidence of all candid minds; nor can an instance be adduced in which they have been so successfully counterfeited as to stand the test of time. An ill or perverse intention as certainly betrays itself in writing as in personal behaviour. Yet this sort of evidence, though it will be more satisfactory than any other to one reader, will be unperceived by another; for cold, feeble, and suspicious minds are destitute of the sympathies to which it appeals.

If the proofs of integrity and veracity in an historian are wanting, or are thought insufficient, we must descend to the evidence which his works afford relative to his intellectual qualifications; and these may be such as fully

to warrant a general confidence in his preference of truth to falsehood. The strongest and the clearest minds attach themselves to truth by an instinctive movement. To acquire the knowledge of facts is their characteristic passion;—to promulgate this knowledge is the function they feel themselves born to fulfil. Nor can it happen that the falsification of facts (in which neither personal interests nor prejudices are involved) should present any adequate inducement to writers whose powers of narration enable them to command more attention in the direct paths of truth and reality than they could hope to gain in the regions of fiction. Every gifted mind has its sphere;—and there is a native talent for history, as well as a genius for poetry; and he who possesses eminently the former will as certainly make himself conversant with realities, as he who may boast the latter will live among the creations of fancy.

If therefore an historical work displays a full vigour of intellect, good sense, elevation of sentiment, and the specific talent for narration, these qualities may safely be held as affording a strong presumptive proof of the author's veracity, even though there are no direct means of ascertaining his moral integrity. The writers who occupy the first rank among the ancient historians possess, therefore, of

course, this presumptive proof of veracity; for the reputation they have so long enjoyed is attributable quite as much to the excellencies of their style, and to their talent for narration, as to the interest or importance of the mere story that forms the subject of their works. These intrinsic merits contain, then, a tacit guarantee for the authenticity of the works they adorn.

On this ground, the good sense, simplicity, ease, and accuracy of Herodotus—the stern vigour, elevation, and dignity of Thucydides, the majesty of Livy, and the philosophic terseness of Tacitus, not only win the admiration of the reader, but, in different degrees, invite or demand his confidence.

There are also qualities of style which, though they may not entitle an author to a place in the first rank of writers, must secure for him the highest regard as an authentic historian. Indeed in this department of literature, those less brilliant and less attractive qualities which give security for an historian's diligence, accuracy, and impartiality, may well be accepted in place of mere genius, or eloquence, or powers of description. There is a specific taste for details, a passion for laborious researches, a superstitious regard to exactness, an indefatigable industry, which, though they may tire the reader who seeks

only for amusement, will secure the confidence and attention of every intelligent student of history. Thus, for example, the assiduity of Diodorus the Sicilian, the accuracy and good sense of Polybius, and the minuteness and amplification of Dionysius the Halicarnassian, give to their works a substantial value which compensates for the want of shining excellencies.

In those historical works which have necessarily been compiled from various documents, a sound judgment in the selection of materials must be considered as the principal merit of an author. In this quality some of the ancient historians were certainly deficient; and yet it must be added that, to this very want of judgment we are indebted for the knowledge of innumerable particulars, in themselves curious, or perhaps important, which modern notions of method, consistency, and propriety, would have retrenched.

Although, to a certain extent, the genius or talent of an historian may be held to vouch for his veracity, yet it is also true that a writer may possess a sort of genius which must bring his fidelity under suspicion. If, for example, he continually indulges his taste for scenes of splendour, or terror, or extraordinary action, or loves to exhibit images of magnanimity or wisdom, surpassing the ordinary reach of human nature; if his personages are heroes, or

if he seems pleased to find occasions on which to display his command of the nervous eloquence of vituperation, we may well conclude that he has too much genius to be simply exact or calmly just.

The consideration of personal and national prejudices enters, of course, into the estimate that is formed of an historian's moral and intellectual character. But these will be best adverted to when we come to mention the exceptions which it is necessary to make against the evidence of historians on particular points.

## II.

### THE MEANS OF INFORMATION POSSESSED BY THE ANCIENT HISTORIANS.

The same kind of confidence that is due to an historian who narrates events in which he was personally concerned, cannot be claimed by one who compiles the history of remote times from such materials as he can collect: for in the former case, if we are assured of the writer's veracity and competency, there remains no room for reasonable doubt, at least in reference to those principal facts of the story for the truth of which his character is pledged. But in the other case, though we

may think well both of the writer's veracity and judgment, the confidence we afford him must still be conditional, and will be measured by the opinion we form of the validity of his authorities.

The entire mass of ancient history may therefore be considered as consisting of two kinds, namely, the *original* and the *compiled.* In the first class may be comprehended, not merely those narratives that are strictly personal, such for instance as the history of the retreat of the 10,000 Greeks, by Xenophon, or the Commentaries of Cæsar, which describe actions wherein the author was immediately concerned; but those also which relate to the events of the author's own times and country, and concerning which he had the most direct and unquestionable means of becoming accurately informed. Such are the history of the Peloponnesian war by Thucydides, the history of the Cataline conspiracy by Sallust, the histories and annals of Tacitus, the history of the reign of Justinian by Procopius, or that of her father's reign by Anna Comnena.

The credibility of historical works of this class must, obviously, be determined chiefly upon the grounds mentioned in the preceding section, that is to say, from the appearances of integrity, impartiality, and good sense, which the work exhibits. Every reader of Thucy-

dides, for example, feels that he may rely with full confidence upon the general authenticity of the narrative;—the extreme caution and unwearied assiduity of the author in ascertaining the truth of whatever he affirms, his exactness in minute circumstances, his eminent good sense and fairness, and the dignity of his manner, all concur to stamp upon the work the seal of truth. In all *original* histories the truth of the story and the veracity of the writer are inseparably linked together:—both must be admitted or both denied.

But by far the greater part of all extant history belongs to the second class: yet among works that must rank merely as *compilations*, some wide distinctions are to be observed, for there are a few of this kind of which the authenticity is little, if at all, inferior to that of the best original histories; while many are, in the ordinary sense of the term, compilations, and deserve only a qualified confidence. In regard to the nature and probable value of their authorities each historian, and indeed almost every separate portion of the works of each, must be estimated apart. Two or three examples will be sufficient to show both the necessity and the mode of exercising this discrimination.

The nine books of Herodotus afford instances of every degree of validity in regard to the

probable value of the materials employed by the author. The reader who in his simplicity peruses that work throughout with an equal faith will be in danger of having his indiscriminate confidence suddenly converted into undistinguishing scepticism, by discovering the slight authority upon which some few portions of it are founded.

Diodorus the Sicilian, is reported to have employed thirty years in preparing materials for his universal history. Like Herodotus, he visited the countries of which he speaks—consulting public records—inspecting monuments—conversing with the learned, and collecting books. And his work exhibits the proofs of this assiduity; but yet when his statements are compared with those of other writers, better informed on particular subjects, it becomes apparent that he exercised too little caution in the selection of his authorities; and that therefore the discrimination of the reader must supply the want of judgment in the writer.

The universal history of Trogus Pompeius, which is extant only in the abridgement made by Justin, seems to have been compiled on a plan somewhat similar to that of the work last mentioned. It is evident that the author collected his materials with considerable diligence and judgment; but yet, that in what

relates to remote nations he was often egregiously misinformed: a striking instance of this kind is furnished in the account he gives of the history and religion of the Jews.* It is evident that the author—whether Trogus or Justin, received his information, not from the source to which he ought to have referred—the Jewish records;—nor even from individuals of that nation; but from some of the neighbouring people of Asia or of Africa. The account given by Tacitus † of the same people is little more just than that of Trogus. If these instances were to be taken as specimens of the accuracy of the ancient historians in all similar cases, their descriptions of remote nations must be held as of very little value. But there seems reason to believe that the history and institutions of the Jews were less known and more misrepresented than those of any other people bordering upon the Mediterranean.

Abundant evidence proves that from the very earliest ages, and in almost all countries, there were persons employed and authorized by governments to digest the current history of the state. These annals contained, of course, the names of kings, and the records of their acts and exploits, their decrees and wars.

* Book xxxvi. cap. 2. † Hist. Book v.

Each city, as well as the capitals of empires, had its archives; and these public documents appear to have suggested the idea of a more comprehensive form of history. They were certainly consulted by those who, in later times, undertook the composition of historical works: by these means there was imparted to such works more of authenticity and exactness than may be generally supposed. Herodotus, Thucydides, Diodorus, Pausanias, Strabo, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch, Arrian, Dion Cassius, and others, evidently availed themselves with all possible diligence of such public records.

The ancient historians conversed extensively with official persons, wherever they travelled; and it must be granted they were often too ready to accept these oral communications as authentic. This is especially to be observed in reference to all those accounts that were confessedly, or that seem to have been received from priests; for that class of persons, accustomed to think truth their enemy, and deception their business, would have thought themselves betraying the interests of their order in furnishing simple facts to an inquirer.

Every city of the ancient world, where civilization had made any progress, was crowded with columns, statues, busts, monuments, inscriptions, by which every memorable event,

and every illustrious personage, was perpetually presented to the regards of the people, and retained in their recollection. To visit a city, to pace its public ways, to enter its temples and its halls, was to peruse its history. The meanest citizen, even a child, could conduct the inquisitive stranger through the streets, and explain to him these memorials of the past. It is difficult for us to form an adequate notion of the extent to which the history of each people was familiarized to them by these means, or how much the living conversed with the dead, and identified themselves with whatever was heroic or wise in preceding times. These public monuments, when collated with the public records, and explained by the public voice, furnished historians with the most abundant materials; and so great was the importance attached to them, that there are instances in which historians made long journeys for the express purpose of examining the sculptures of a city, whose history they had occasion incidentally to mention.

What was most wanting to give a higher value, in point of authenticity, to the materials so diligently collected by the ancient historians was, that general diffusion of information among nations, which would have subjected the fables and pretensions of each people to the animadversion of others, and have allowed

a more ready and complete collation of discordant evidence on the same points. The Greeks were little acquainted with the languages of the surrounding nations, and egregiously ignorant of facts in which they were not immediately concerned. If the literature of the Asiatic nations had been familiarly current in Greece, and that of Greece in Asia, both would have been purged of many errors and frivolities; and something more of that consistency, expansion, and good sense imparted on both sides, which were acquired by the Roman writers in consequence of their acquaintance with the literature of Greece. In the department of history, especially, such an interchange of light would have enhanced the value, as well as augmented the amount of knowledge. Knowledge, like the vital fluid, corrupts whenever it ceases freely to circulate.

On this ground, the moderns have incomparably the advantage over the ancients; and if party interests and political prejudices act more forcibly in modern times, the means of correction are also vastly more efficient. The European nations have, on important subjects, a common literature—all things are known by all. National misrepresentations are quickly noticed and chastised. The same corrective process is actively carried on in each commu-

nity; and if particular falsifications abound, the ultimate probabilities of the prevalence of truth are still more abundant.

## III.

### THE TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF HISTORICAL WORKS.

To ascertain the antiquity of historical works is peculiarly important, because when that is proved, we obtain, in most instances, a conclusive proof of the general truth of the narrative. For if a history was published, and widely circulated, and generally admitted to be authentic in the very age when the principal facts to which it relates were matters of universal notoriety, when most of the lesser circumstances were perfectly known by many of the author's contemporaries, and when some of his contemporaries were personally interested in the story, we have the best reasons for confiding in the truth and accuracy of the history.

No pretended history, published under the circumstances above named, which was altogether untrue in its main particulars, or grossly incorrect in its details, could, by any accident, or any endeavours, gain general and lasting re-

putation as an authentic work. No such book could endure and survive the scrutiny of contemporary antagonists; no such book could maintain its reputation through the next age, when the means of ascertaining the truth of the narrative were still extant, and when the interests and prejudices of the moment had subsided.

As in relation to the sources of information possessed by historians, it was seen that historical works should be divided into two classes, the *original*, and the *derived;* so a similar, but not exactly an identical division must be made in relation to the circumstances under which such books were published. In the *first* class are to be included those histories of the truth of which the author's contemporaries, in general, were competent judges; and in the *second*, such, as being drawn from rare, or recondite, or scattered materials, and relating to events remote in time or place, could not be open to the test of public opinion, and could be estimated only by a few learned individuals.

Histories of the *first* kind may be termed *popular;* those of the *second*, *learned*. It is evident that *learned* histories, though on different grounds, may deserve a high degree of confidence on the score of authenticity and accuracy; and, indeed, for impartiality and com-

prehensive information, and exactness in details, they may greatly surpass any of the original narratives from which they were compiled. For a later historian, if industrious, judicious, and unprejudiced, may so collect and collate the various mass of subsidiary testimonies bearing upon particular facts, as shall give much more of consistency to his narrative than belongs to any earlier work on the same subject.

But the direct proof of authenticity belongs *exclusively* to *popular* histories. A work of this class is, essentially, a condensation of the common knowledge of a nation or community; it is the universal testimony, arranged and compacted by one who aims to found his personal reputation as a writer upon the consent of his contemporaries. We pass through the crowded ways of a metropolis, and hear, in substance, the same account of some recent and public transaction from a thousand lips, and from opposing parties; or we read a narrative of this event drawn up by a contemporary writer, whose veracity is tacitly or explicitly assented to by the same parties. The validity of the evidence is alike in both cases; only that for accuracy and consistency the accepted written narrative will be found to surpass the oral testimony.

Viewed with reference to the distinction

above mentioned, the latter books of Herodotus may be included in the class of popular histories, and deserve therefore the confidence due to a narrative generally accepted as true by those who were well acquainted with the facts it describes, and many of whom were personally interested in the story. The history of the Peloponnesian war has a still higher claim to unimpeachable authenticity, inasmuch as the facts were more recent at the time of the publication of the work; and because, also, the strongest sentiments of national rivalry and civil discord were in activity and readiness to crush, on the instant, any attempted misrepresentation. The author's hope that his work should descend to posterity, rested directly upon such an adherence to truth, as should remove from all parties the opportunity of giving any plausibility to a charge of falsification.

Xenophon's history of Greece possesses, in part, a claim to credibility on the same ground. The Cyropædia, on the contrary, is altogether destitute of authentication from this source; for the Greeks, at the time when the work was published, were far from being generally competent to judge of the truth of the story. The same author's account of the expedition of Cyrus, may, in this respect, take a middle place between the two above named works. It was

not composed, as there is reason to believe, till many years after the writer's return from Asia; and though the general facts were still matters of notoriety, the particulars could not then be universally recollected, especially as the scene of these transactions was remote from Greece.

The works of Sallust, of Cæsar, of Tacitus, of Suetonius, of Polybius, claim, in whole or in part, the authority of popular histories, generally accredited as authentic by those who were well acquainted with the facts they contain.

But, excepting smaller portions, or particular facts, the works of Diodorus, of Dionysius the Halicarnassian, of Nepos, of Ælian, of Paterculus, of Curtius, of Plutarch, of Arrian, of Appian, of Pausanius, and many others, are to be regarded only as learned compilations, whose claim to authenticity is of an indirect kind.

## IV.

### EXCEPTIONS NECESSARY TO BE MADE AGAINST THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORIANS ON PARTICULAR POINTS, ARISING EITHER FROM THE PECULIAR NATURE OF THE FACTS AFFIRMED, OR FROM THE APPARENT INFLUENCE OF PREJUDICE, PERSONAL OR NATIONAL.

From the nature of the case the authenticity of an historical work can be affirmed only indefinitely, and must be understood to be liable to particular exceptions. Such exceptions may be made without at all impeaching the character of the writer for veracity, or even general accuracy. For he may have been imposed upon in particular instances by his informants; he may have reported things currently believed in his time, without thinking himself pledged personally for their truth; he may not have thought himself called upon as an historian to discuss questions which might more properly be treated by philosophers; or he may have been simply negligent, here and there, in the course of a voluminous work. Yet apologies of this sort must, as it is evident, be confined to cases of an incidental kind, and to a writer's account of facts not immediately known to himself. For in a narrative of events, of which

the writer professes himself to have had a personal knowledge, we must either admit his veracity, and with it the truth of the facts, or deny both.

The chief point to be considered, when the affirmation of an historian on a particular point is doubted, is *the nature of the fact in question.*

1. If, for example, it be a question of numbers, measures, or dates, we have always to remember, as before remarked, that a specific and peculiar uncertainty attaches to these matters in ancient authors, owing to the method of notation by letters, which were easily mistaken one for another. The numbers of which armies were composed—the numbers of the slain in battle—the population of cities—the revenues of states—the distances of places—the weight or measure of bodies, and computations of time, must, therefore, always be held open to question; and that without in the least derogating from the credit of the work in which they occur. Besides the probable corruption of copies in such instances, it is to be remembered that many of the particulars abovenamed, are in themselves liable to more uncertainty or mistake than other facts, so that scarcely any degree of diligence and care on the part of an historian, will entirely secure him from errors on such points.

2. Geographical details, descriptions of the

objects of natural history, or accounts of physical phenomena, must also generally be considered as open to uncertainty, on account of the imperfect information upon these subjects which was possessed by the ancients. Yet the names and relative distances of places in all the countries that border upon the Mediterranean Sea, as reported by ancient geographers and historians, have been to so great an extent authenticated by the researches of modern scholars, that apparent inconsistencies should not hastily be assumed as proofs of ignorance. But whatever relates to countries remote from Greece and Italy, or beyond the bounds of the Persian, Macedonian, Carthagenian, and Roman empires, must of course be received with some hesitation. Many of these descriptions of remote countries, when compared with the accounts of modern travellers, afford at once amusing instances of the usual processes of exaggeration, and striking attestations of the substantial authenticity of the works in which they occur. For the coincidence of these accounts, in many respects, with the facts as now fully known, prove that the historian had actually conversed with natives of those countries, or with travellers; while the distortion of the picture is precisely what might be expected from the channels through which the information was derived.

3. The descriptions so frequently to be met with in ancient writers, of monstrous men or animals—griffins—dragons—hydras—pygmies —giants; or of trees bearing golden fruit, of fountains flowing with perfumes, or even with the precious metals, &c. may, in most cases, be now traced to actual facts, which, passing to the writer through the medium of ignorant, fanciful, or interested reporters, assumed the characteristic extravagance of fables. On occasions of this kind it is much more becoming to an intelligent student of history to inquire among the stores of modern science for the probable origin of such accounts, than to pass them by with the sneer of indolent scepticism. Some writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took so much offence at some passages of this kind in the history of Herodotus, as to treat the entire work of that industrious and generally accurate writer with contempt, as if it were little better than a collection of fables. This rash censure now falls back upon themselves; for modern travellers, in visiting the countries described by the father of history, have frequent occasion to notice the correctness of his statements, or their substantial truth, even in those relations which seem the most open to suspicion.

4. In the description of natural phenomena, meteors, tempests, eruptions of volcanoes,

earthquakes, eclipses, &c. all that is needed is to remove from the narrative of the historian those connective circumstances, or those decorative phrases, by which such occurrences were accommodated to the political events of the moment, at the suggestion of an abject and presumptuous superstition.

And here we must take occasion to notice a remarkable difference observable between the Jewish writers and those of other nations, in the nature of the marvellous or supernatural facts they describe. The marvellous events reported by the Greek and Roman authors may, with few exceptions, be classed under two heads; namely, allegorical and poetical combinations, so obviously fabulous, as to ask for no credence, and to demand no scrutiny; or mere exaggerations, distortions, or misapplications of natural objects or phenomena. But the Jewish historians and poets do not describe as actually existing any such allegorical monsters; and their descriptions of real animals are either simply exact, or evidently *poetical*, (like those in the book of Job) but not *fabulous*. They do not give a supernatural colouring to ordinary phenomena, or convert plain facts into prodigies. The supernatural events they record, as matters of history, are such deviations from the standing order of natural causes and effects, as leave no alternative between a

denial of the veracity of the writers, or a submission to their affirmation of divine agency.

The freedom of the Jewish historians, poets, and prophets, from those admixtures of the marvellous with which all other ancient writers abound, is one of the most remarkable of their characteristics. Their descriptions of human nature are neither heroical nor fantastic; their narratives of human affairs are of the simplest complexion, and strictly consistent with the known modes of the time and country. Nor is our assent taxed on any occasion, except when an event is recorded which, unless it had actually taken place, could not have been affirmed by any but profligate impostors.

But to return. Besides those prodigies met with in the profane historians which only require to be freed from the exaggerations that ignorance, poetry, or superstition may have added to plain matters of fact, there are other accounts which cannot satisfactorily be so explained, and which call for the exercise of some discrimination. They are such as must be either altogether false, or else imply, in some sense, a supernatural agency. Of the former kind may well be reckoned all, or almost all, those alleged supernatural occurrences which were pretty plainly contrived to give credit to the established superstition, or to subserve the present designs of statesmen or commanders,

and which, in most cases, rested exclusively upon the testimony of priests. But on the other hand, there are recorded in the pages of profane history some few facts apparently above the range of natural causes, which cannot be rejected as untrue, without doing violence to the soundest principles of evidence, and which will not be treated with uninquisitive contempt, except by a purblind scepticism, more nearly allied to credulity than to true philosophy. These peculiar cases demand a more full and particular consideration than it is compatible with the design of this volume to bestow upon them.

5. The political habits and tastes of the Greeks and Romans, induced their historians to supply the personages of their story with formal speeches on all remarkable occasions; for oratory was the spring and life of every political movement; and as the machine of government could not circulate without harangues, history must not seem to omit them. But there is little reason to believe that authentic reports of public speeches were often in the possession of historians. Indeed, these portions of the history are generally so much in the manner of the author, as to leave the reader in no doubt to whom to attribute them. Yet it may be imagined that, on some memorable occasions, the very words of a short

speech, or the purport of an oration, were remembered and recorded, and so were worked into the speech framed by the historian.

A compliance with the taste of the times seems also to have led some writers to divert the attention of their readers, and to relieve for a moment the burden of the narrative by introducing digressions, often of a trivial kind, which, though not announced as mere embellishments, and perhaps not purely fictitious, are evidently not intended to claim an equal degree of confidence with the main circumstances of the narrative.

6. The secret motives of public men, or the hidden causes of important events, are not the proper subjects of history, which is concerned only with such facts as may be fairly known. The disquisitions of an historian on such topics are therefore to be excepted from his work; when he so forsakes his function, he must be forsaken by his reader; his errors on such points impeach not his veracity, but his judgment.

7. Very few important facts, such as form the proper subjects of history, rest exclusively upon the testimony of a single historian, or are incapable of being directly or remotely confirmed by some kind of coincident evidence. Whenever therefore a question arises relative to the truth of a particular statement, recourse

must be had to the testimony of contemporary writers, or to the evidence of existing monuments. But even if all such means of corroboration should fail, if we meet only with a perplexing silence, where we expect to find confirmation, we are by no means justified in rejecting the unsupported testimony, merely on the ground of this want of correlative support. Innumerable instances may be adduced of the most extraordinary silence of historians relative to facts with which they must have been acquainted, and which seemed to lie directly in the course of their narrative. Many important circumstances are mentioned by no ancient writer, though unquestionably established by the evidence of existing inscriptions, coins, statues, or buildings. There are also facts mentioned only by one historian which happen to be attested by an incidental coincidence with some relic of antiquity lately brought to light; if this relic had remained in its long obscurity, such facts might (we see with how little reason) have been disputed.

Nothing can be more fallacious than an inference drawn from the silence of historians relative to particular facts. For a full, comprehensive, and, if the phrase may be used, a *business-like* method of writing history, in which nothing important, nothing which the well-informed reader will look for, must be omitted,

is the produce of modern improvements in thinking and writing. The general diffusion of knowledge, and the instant activity of criticism, occasion a much higher demand in matters of information to be made upon writers than was thought of in ancient times. A full and exact communication of facts has come to be valued more highly than any mere beauties of style; at least, no beauties of style are allowed to atone for palpable deficiencies in matters of fact. The moderns must be taught and pleased; but the ancients would be pleased and taught. Ancient writers, and the historians not less than others, seem to have formed their notions of prose composition very much upon the model of poetry, which was in most languages the earliest kind of literature. As their epics were histories, so, in some degree, their histories were epics. Such particulars, therefore, were taken up in the course of the narrative, as seemed best to accord with the abstract idea of the work; not always those which a rigid adherence to a plan of comprehension would have made it necessary to notice.

8. The influence of personal or party prejudices is indefinite; and as it may distort the representations of an historian almost unconsciously to himself, and without impugning his general integrity, so it will, in most

instances, be impossible, especially after the lapse of ages, to discover the precise extent to which the operation of such prejudices should be allowed for. But if it cannot be ascertained how much of the colouring of the picture is to be attributed to the medium through which an historian exhibits his characters, yet the general hues of that medium will hardly escape the observation of any reader; and being observed, the illusion is destroyed.

But in relation to the influence of personal and party prejudices the ancient historians unquestionably appear to advantage when compared with those of modern times. Instances of equanimity might be cited from the Greek historians, to which few parallels could be adduced from the pages of modern writers. Like the sculptures of the same people, the works of the Greek historians, though not wanting in the distinctive characters or moving energy of life, present an aspect from which the sublimity of repose is never lost. These writers seem to have been conscious that they were holding up the picture of their times for the eyes of all mankind in all ages: they forgot, therefore, the passions and interests of the moment.

But the instantaneous diffusion of books through all ranks of the community, places a

modern author too nearly in the presence of his contemporaries to allow him to think much of posterity. The clamour of public opinion rings around his seclusion: his situation, in its essential circumstances, is almost the same as that of the public speaker—the din of the crowd fills his thoughts, and he forgets the distant fame which his talents might command. This presence of his audience offers therefore to a modern writer every excitement and every inducement to the indulgence of party misrepresentations. If it were not for the correcting influences of a free press, nothing worthy of the name of history would be produced in modern times.

9. That the Greeks were not in fact much inferior to the pictures given of them by their historians, the existing monuments of their philosophy, their poetry and their arts, abundantly attest. Indeed if we pass from an examination of these monuments and remains to the perusal of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, we shall be far from thinking that a tone of exaggerated encomium is to be charged upon those writers. From the pages of the historians alone we should fail to form an adequate idea of the perfection attained in all the departments of literature and art by the people whose political affairs they narrate. Scarcely half of the history of Greece, in a full

and philosophical sense of the term, is to be gathered from its historians:—we must seek for it rather in the remains of its general literature, in museums and cabinets, and among the ruins that still bespread its soil.

It is not therefore this sort of general misrepresentation that is to be suspected in the Greek historians; for more is proved by other means than is explicitly affirmed by them. But it has been supposed that in their accounts of military affairs, the Greek historians, in order to enhance the glory of their countrymen in repelling the Persian invasions, have vastly exaggerated the power and extent of that empire, and the amount of the armies with which those of Greece had to contend. Some misrepresentations of this kind may have been admitted. But yet the pictures given by the Greek writers of the wealth and resources of the Persian power, of the peurile ambition of its monarchs, of the countless hosts which they drove before them by the lash into Scythia, Egypt, and Europe; conquering nations rather by devastation than by military conduct, by the mouths, more than by the swords of their armies, are so strikingly similar to unquestionable facts in the later history of the Asiatic empires, that, as the one cannot be doubted, the other need not be deemed incredible.

10. The arrogance with which, under the term *barbarians*, the Greek writers speak of all nations not of Greek extraction, naturally suggests the belief that we must not look to them for a just idea of the state of civilization in the surrounding nations. And not a few indications may be gathered from other sources which authorize the belief that, in communities not very distant from Greece itself, or its colonies, a degree of intelligence and of refinement existed of which it was their shame to be ignorant, or their greater shame to have taken so little notice.

11. With the Romans it was perhaps less from mere national vanity than from a dictate of that deep plotted policy by which they supported their unbounded pretensions, that they were induced to misrepresent the resources and the conduct of the nations on whose necks they trampled. This policy would often produce misrepresentations of a contrary kind to those suggested by national vanity. That universal empire was the right of the Roman arms was the principle of the state: a reverse of fortune therefore was not simply a calamity —it was a seeming impeachment of the high claim of the republic. The nations must not think that their masters could any where find equals or rivals in courage or military skill. A defeat hurt the political faith of the Roman

citizen much more than it alarmed his fears; and he would rather waive the glory of having broken an arm of equal strength with his own, than confess that there was any where an arm of equal strength to resist his will. He would choose to sustain the aggravated shame of having been beaten by an inferior, rather than redeem a part of his dishonour by acknowledging that he had encountered a superior. A writer therefore could not do full justice to the courage, conduct and successes of the enemies of Rome without offering such an outrage to the common feeling as would have amounted almost to treason against the state.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONFIRMATIONS OF THE EVIDENCE OF HISTORIANS DERIVED FROM INDEPENDENT SOURCES.

Most of the principal facts mentioned by ancient historians, as well as many particulars of less importance, are confirmed by evidence that is altogether independent in its nature, and in the channels through which it is derived. In truth, though the narratives of the historians serve to connect and explain the entire mass of information that has descended to modern times, relative to the nations of remote antiquity, they are far from being the sole sources of that information:—perhaps they hardly furnish one half of the materials of history. These independent sources of history may be classed under the following heads:—

1. The remains of the general literature of the nations of antiquity.

2. Chronological documents or calculations.

3. Permanent geographical and physical facts.

4. Permanent institutions, usages, or physical peculiarities of nations.

5. Existing monuments of art.

The information derived from these sources answers two distinct purposes, namely—that of contributing to the amount of our knowledge of the state of civilization among ancient nations, and that of furnishing the means of corroborating or of correcting the assertions of historians on particular points. It is obvious that to go through the particulars comprehended under the general heads above named with any degree of precision, would greatly exceed the limits of a small volume; and the object proposed in this work will be sufficiently attained by merely pointing out, in a few instances, the nature and value of this sort of corroborative evidence.

1. Evidence derived from books, coming as it does through similar, if not the same channels with those by which we receive the works of the historians, and being of the same external form, is likely to produce less impression on the mind than its real validity ought to command. And yet if it be examined in detail nothing can be more conclusive than the proof that arises from the coincidences of names and allusions, found scattered through the works

of dramatists, orators, poets, and philosophers, with the explicit statements of contemporary historians. If, for example, the plays of Aristophanes and the orations of Demosthenes are collated with the narrations of Xenophon, of Diodorus and of Plutarch;—or if the epistles and orations of Cicero, and the satires of Horace, and of Juvenal, are compared with the historical works of Livy, of Sallust, of Tacitus, and of Dion Cassius, so many points of agreement present themselves as must convince every one that these historical assertions and allusions had a common origin in actual facts.

Yet it is not merely by presenting exact coincidences on particular points that the remains of ancient literature confirm the evidence of historians; but also by furnishing such pictures of the people among whom they were current, in all the points of their political, religious, and social condition, as accord with the representations of historians. To exhibit the proper force of this sort of evidence, let it be imagined that—all proper names being withdrawn from the works of the classical poets, orators, and philosophers, it were attempted to associate, as countrymen and contemporaries, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, with Cicero, Horace and Seneca; or Tacitus, Cæsar and Suetonius, with Isocrates,

Plato and Æschylus; every page in the one class of writers would present some incongruity with the accounts given by the others. But on the contrary, in perusing contemporary writers of the same nation, whatever may be the diversities of their style or subject, we feel that they were surrounded by the same objects, and open to the same influences.

2. The corroborative evidence derived from chronological inscriptions, or from calculations can never be well separated from recondite and minute investigations, and is therefore not adapted to our present purpose. Indeed the ancient historians being often destitute of sufficiently precise chronological information, and often less observant of dates than the modern style of history demands, leave the subject open to perplexing difficulties; and to these difficulties are added that uncertainty which belongs peculiarly, as we have before remarked, to whatever relates to numbers in the text of ancient authors. It must not however be supposed that ancient chronology is altogether unfixed, for though it may be hard to determine the precise time of many events, the results of different calculations are seldom so widely discordant as to be of much importance in the general outline of history.

3. The inequalities of the earth's surface,

the course of rivers, the peculiarities of climate, and the vegetable and animal productions of each country, though not immutable, are not ordinarily subject, even in the lapse of many ages, to very extensive changes. We have therefore now open to our observation the same scenes and the same physical appearances which were described or alluded to by historians twenty centuries ago; and so far as we find their accounts of these permanent objects to accord with present and well known facts, we may fairly accept such coincidences as a pledge of general accuracy and authenticity: for if an historian was careful to obtain correct information on points indirectly connected with his subject, it is but just to believe that he was at least equally exact in what belongs more immediately to his narrative.

We have already adverted to the geographical accuracy of Herodotus, and have remarked that the descriptions he gives of countries and their productions are such, for the most part, as prove that he had himself seen what he describes. That the Greek historians should be exact in what relates to the geography and productions of their own narrow soil is nothing more than what must be expected. But when we find them accurate in their descriptions of regions remote

from Greece, and very imperfectly known to their countrymen in general, they furnish a proof of authenticity that may be extended to cases in which we are obliged to accept their unsupported testimony.

A sufficient illustration on this head is furnished in the instance of Arrian's history of Alexander's expedition—his Indian history, and his description of the shores of the Indian Ocean. The geographical particulars which occur in these works are, in general, so exact that modern travellers find no difficulty in identifying every spot he mentions. This proof of accuracy well supports the claim to authentic information advanced by the author at the commencement of his work, where he declares that his history is compiled from the memoirs of Ptolemy and of Aristobulus, two of Alexander's generals; that he had collated their assertions on all points, and added from other sources, only such particulars as seemed to be the most worthy of credit.

Now if Arrian's history of Alexander's expedition is compared with that of Quintus Curtius, on points of geography, it will be found that the latter writer was either utterly ignorant on the subject, or quite indifferent to the correctness of his statements. This proof therefore of want of diligence or want of information detracts very greatly from the his-

torian's authority on all points which rest on his sole testimony. Though an able and attractive writer, Curtius awakens the reader's suspicion by the character of his style, which betrays a fondness for decoration and enlargement:—this suspicion is then not a little enhanced by the palpable evidence of his inaccuracy in matters of fact.

The permanence of the names of places, under various modifications in the value of vowels or consonants, affords a very curious and important means of authenticating the assertions of ancient historians. Innumerable instances may be adduced in which the names of obscure villages in Asia Minor, Armenia, Persia, Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, and Nubia, recal to every one's recollection the names occurring in the ancient history of the same countries. And those remote names could never have found their way into the pages of the Greek and Roman historians if they had not sought and employed genuine documents in the composition of their works.

In many particulars the statements of the ancient geographers—Strabo, Ptolemy, Pliny, and Pausanias, are at variance with each other, and with the narratives of the contemporary historians; but in by far the greater number of instances there is as much accordance as is usually found among modern tra-

vellers. And when the ancient geography, whether collected from geographers or historians, is collated with the modern—whatever difficulties may here and there present themselves in the way of a perfect conciliation, no one can doubt that the former, taken as a whole, is a genuine account of facts collected by actual observation.

4. A similar kind of confirmation arises from a comparison of the descriptions given by the ancient historians of the physical peculiarities, manners, and usages of nations, with facts relative to the modern occupants of the same countries. If national manners and usages are less permanent than the features of the country or than the productions of the soil, they are much more so than might be supposed when we recollect how many revolutions sweep across the surface of society in the course of ages. Though man is not absolutely the creature of the soil that supports him, and though he does not retain every peculiarity which descends to him from his progenitors, yet neither is he ever free from some permanent marks of tribe, of climate, or of locality. Or if by the developement of mind and the advance of civilization, his circumstances and his manners undergo apparently a thorough and universal change, yet even then will there remain many lesser indications of his obsolete

condition; and many habits and usages, too minute and trivial to have attracted attention, if they did not awaken historical recollections, will continue to identify the modern with the ancient race. Four conquests and eighteen centuries have not wholly obliterated from the English people all traces of their British ancestors; and in some races, for example—the Egyptian, the Jewish, and the Scythian, a much more perceptible sameness has been maintained during even a longer course of ages.

Such living monuments of antiquity are not only highly curious in themselves, but very significant for the illustration of ancient history. Yet it must be acknowledged that the materials for this kind of illustration are the most abundant where they are of the least value; and the scantiest where they would be the most prized. For it is among half civilized nations, that manners and modes of life are permanent; while the advance of intelligence and refinement produces changes so great as to leave only faint traces of original characteristics. Thus in the plains of Asia, and in the deserts of Africa, we find nations which, in their physical peculiarities, their manners and usages, differ little, if at all, from the descriptions given of their predecessors on the same soil by Herodotus, or Strabo. Meanwhile the successive occupants of the European con-

tinent—active, intelligent and free, have passed under all forms of human life, and have retained but few resemblances to their remote ancestors.

One climate, indeed, necessitates a much greater degree of permanency in the habits of the people than another. The fervours of the equatorial regions, and the rigours of the north, subdue man to a passive conformity with certain modes of life. These extremes of temperature vanquish his individual will, forbid the caprices of his tastes, and restrain his invention. But in temperate climates, almost every mode of life is practicable, and almost all modes will therefore in turns be practised.

The permanency of manners, even where the most extensive revolutions have taken place, is strikingly displayed in the modern people of Greece. The successive generations of six-and-twenty centuries have passed away since the Iliad and Odyssey were composed, and yet, when the ancient race, as described by Homer, is compared with the modern people, the points of sameness are innumerable.* Not only is the language essentially the same, but the modes of thinking and feeling, the superstitions, the costumes, the habits of the inha-

* Dodwell, in his Classical Tour in Greece, points out a great number of these coincidences.

bitants of particular spots have, in a large number of instances, been scarcely affected by the lapse of time. If the peculiarities of the race, as described by Homer, may still be recognized, it is no wonder if we find in the present manners of the people numerous illustrations of the pictures drawn by the historians of a later age. The descriptions given by Cæsar and Tacitus of the manners of the Gauls, Britons, and Germans, are capable of receiving a like authentication, though not in an equal degree, from usages still existing among the northern nations of Europe.

5. The existing remains of ancient art would almost supply materials for a body of history, if all books had perished. These relics sometimes serve to establish particular facts, and sometimes afford ground from which to deduce general inferences relative to the wealth, power, and intelligence of the nations to whom they belonged. In either case, the evidence they yield is of the most conclusive kind; for the solid material is in our hands, or before our eyes, and in most cases is liable to no misinterpretation.

So extensive are the inferences that may fairly be derived from such existing remains, that of some ancient nations we know more from this source alone, than is to be gathered from the entire evidence of written history;

at least, what is thus learned, if it be in some respects vague, has more of the substantial quality of knowledge, and much better deserves to be called *history*, than those bare catalogues of the names of kings, which are often dignified with the term. A name, or twenty names, unconnected with general facts; or a date, serving only to bring a bare name into its proper place in a chronological chart, may indeed impart the semblance of history, but affords almost nothing of the substance. What we gather, for example, from written history, relative to the Assyrian empire, or to the early kingdoms of Greece, is much less significant than the historical inferences relative to the people of Egypt, which are fairly deducible from the remains of their architecture.

The existing monuments of art, available as sources of historical information, are, 1. buildings and public works; 2. sculptures and gems; 3. inscriptions and coins; 4. paintings, mosaics, and vases; and 5. implements and arms.

For the purpose of confirming, correcting, or illustrating the assertions of historians on particular points, recourse must most often be had to the evidence of inscriptions* and coins; and

* No one can question the utility of inscriptions for the illustration of history: but the student who cannot devote his

every one knows that from these sources all the leading facts of Greek and Roman history may be authenticated. The latter are especially important, both on account of the information they convey, and of the mode of its transmission to modern times. Coins are brief public records. The device they bear is seldom devoid of some significant allusion to the peculiar pretensions of the realm or city; the image, corresponding in form and expression with sculptures or descriptions, fixes the identity of the personage; and the legend furnishes names and other notices. Coins, therefore, concentrate several kinds of evidence; and, like books, by their multitude, their diffusion, and by the mode of their conservation to modern times, they are, with very few and unimportant exceptions, placed far beyond the reach of fraud or deception. The cabinets of the opulent in all countries are filled with complete series of these historical records; and the

undivided attention to the subject, or who has not access to the fullest and best sources of information, may very probably waste his time upon documents that he will afterwards discover to be extremely fallacious. In no department of antiquarian learning have misrepresentations, deceptions, and errors of inadvertency more abounded. Authors who were long regarded as unexceptionable authorities are found to deserve little confidence, and on such points a writer who is not worthy of great confidence, is worthy of none.

spade every day turns up counterparts to those already known. Statues and buildings have been discovered here and there; but coins are the produce of every soil which civilization has at any time visited.

Sculptures are either historical or poetical; those of the first kind yield a confirmation to history which, though indefinite, is worthy of attention. That the principal personages whose names occur in history were represented by the artists of their times, is not only probable, but well known. Statues or busts of the most distinguished public persons were given to the world by several artists, and were placed in all the principal cities of the republic or the empire, that claimed any reflection of their glory. The common principle of competition among artists would secure some tolerable uniformity—the uniformity of resemblance to the originals, among these statues and busts; nor do we at all pass the bounds of probability in supposing them to be in general real and good portraits. There is, besides, in most of them, an air of individuality, which at once convinces the practised eye of their authenticity.

So much being assumed, the congruity of these forms with the character of the men as presented on the page of history, carries with it a proof of the truth of those records, which

few observers of the human physiognomy can question. In order to perceive the force of this kind of evidence, it is not at all necessary to call for the aid of any systems of physiognomical science (so called); every one's intuitive discernment will suffice for the purpose. Let the simplest observer of faces and forms, who has read the history of Greece and Rome, look round a gallery of antique statues and busts, will he be in danger of misnaming the heads of Themistocles and of Alexander, of Plato and of Cicero, of Phocion and of Alcibiades, of Demosthenes and of Euclid, of Julius Cæsar and of Nero? To those whose eye is exercised in the discrimination of forms, the best executed of these antique heads speak their own biography with a distinctness that gives irresistible attestation to the accounts of historians.

Mythological or poetical sculptures afford inferences of a more general kind, most of which are suggested also by an examination of the temples of which they were the furniture. The exquisite forms of the Grecian chisel declare that the superstition they embodied, though frivolous and licentious, was framed more for pleasure than for fear; that it was rather poetical than metaphysical. They do not indicate that the religious system of the people was sanguinary and ferocious;

or that it was the engine of priestly despotism. One would imagine that the ministers of these deities were more the servants of the people's amusements, than the tyrants of their consciences, property, and persons.

The Grecian sculptures give proof that the superstition to which they belonged, however false or absurd it might be, was open to all the ameliorations and embellishments of a highly refined literature. The sacred sculptures of India are undisguised and significant representatives of the horrid vices enjoined and practised by the priests. But the lettered taste of the Greeks taught their artists to invest each attribute of evil with some form of beauty. The hideousness of the vindictive passions must be hid beneath the character of tranquil power; and the loathsomeness of the sensual passions veiled by the perfect ideal of loveliness. Art, left to itself, does not adopt these corrections, nor do the authors of superstitious systems ask for them. There must be poetry, there must be philosophy at hand, to whisper cautions to the wantonness of art.

When the remains of ancient structures are examined for the purpose of collecting historical information, they must be viewed under three distinct aspects; namely—the resources required for their construction—the purposes to which they were devoted; and the taste

they display. A few instances will show the nature and extent of the inferences that may be drawn from such an examination.

The remains of Egyptian architecture have long outlasted the fame of those whose names they were charged to transmit to distant times. Or if some few names have been handed down by historians, or have been drawn from their hieroglyphical concealments by modern researches, the whole amount of such discoveries may be comprised in a few lines, and falls very far short of conveying any thing like a history of the people. But some general facts relative to the wealth, commerce, industry, institutions, manners, and superstitions of the Egyptians, have been reported by historians; and the descriptions of that country and its people, given by Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus, and Plutarch, confirmed by incidental allusions in other writers, and especially by a few significant expressions occurring in the Jewish Scriptures, afford a tolerably complete idea of this the most extraordinary of all nations, ancient or modern. Now this testimony of the historians is corroborated, with peculiar distinctness, by those ruins which still lead the traveller to the banks of the Nile.

These stupendous remains attest, in the first place, the unbounded wealth affirmed by historians to have been at the command of the

Egyptian monarchs; a wealth derived chiefly from the extraordinary fertility of the country, which, like the plains of Babylon, yielded a three hundred-fold return of grain. And as the revenues of a vast empire were added to the home resources of the Babylonian monarchs, so the products of a widely extended commerce augmented the treasures of the Egyptian kings. The mouths of the Nile became the centre of trade between the eastern and the western worlds; and that river, after depositing a teeming mud in one year, bore upon its bosom, in the next, the harvest it had given, for the supply of distant and less fertile regions. Nor was the industry of the people—numerous beyond example, wanting to improve every advantage of nature. But for whom was this unbounded wealth amassed? under whose control was it expended? The testimony of historians coincides with that of the existing ruins in declaring that a despotism, political and religious, of unexampled perfection, and very unlike any thing that has since been seen, disposed of the vast surplus products of agriculture and of commerce.

By what forms of exaction or monopoly the Egyptian kings held at their command the property and the services of the people, cannot be satisfactorily determined; but it seems as if only one centre of real possession was acknow-

ledged, and that habits of thinking and acting, bound down to certain unalterable modes, by ten thousand threads of superstitious observances, favoured a tranquil transfer of all rights to the head of the state. With such resources therefore at his disposal, and with a people much better fitted by their temperament and habits for labour than for war—for the inhabitants of fertile plains have ever been less warlike than those of mountainous regions—the master of Egypt could hardly do otherwise than expend his means upon extensive structures.

Such a degree of scientific skill in masonry as belongs to a middle stage of civilization, in which the human faculties are but half developed, is what the accounts of historians would lead us to expect; and it is just what these remains actually display. There is some science, but there is much more of cost and labour. The works undertaken by the Egyptian builders were such as a calculable waste of human life would complete; but not such as demand the mastery of practical difficulties by high efforts of mathematical genius. They could rear pyramids, or excavate catacombs, or hew temples from solid rocks of granite; but they attempted no works like those executed by the artists of the middle ages. For to poise so high in air the fretted roof and slender spire of a gothic minster required a *cost of mind*

greater than was at the command of the Egyptian kings.

The purposes to which the structures of Egypt appear to have been devoted, agree also with the accounts of historians. If the established despotism were such as to permit capricious sovereigns to indulge their personal vanity without restraint, better and more wise maxims of government were acknowledged and often followed; and the traces of public works of vast extent and great utility every where attest the intelligence and good dispositions of some of the Egyptian kings. Canals, piers, reservoirs, aqueducts, are not less abundant than temples and pyramids. Indeed the temples of Egypt must not be placed altogether to the account of the vanity of kings, or the pride of priests; for as the Roman emperors expended a portion of the tribute of the world in the erection of theatres for the gratification of favoured provinces, so the Egyptian kings, for the pleasure of their subjects, reared in all parts of the land those sacred menageries of worshipful bulls, crocodiles, cows, apes, cats, dogs, onions, and others, the like august personages of the common religion. And it is recorded that the two kings whose names were held in execration by posterity on account of the cruel labours they exacted from their people, were not builders of temples, but of pyramids. (Herodotus, book 2. sec. 128.)

A mound of earth one foot in height satisfies that feeling of our nature which impels us to preserve from disturbance the recent remains of the dead; but a pyramid five hundred feet in height was not too tall a tomb for an Egyptian king! The varnished doll into which the art of the apothecary converted the carcase of the deceased monarch, must needs rest in the deep bowels of a mountain of hewn stone! More complete proof of the absolute subjugation of the popular will in ancient Egypt cannot be imagined than that afforded by the fact, that so much masonry was piled for such a purpose. The pyramids could never move the general enthusiasm of the people, they could only gratify the crazy vanity of the man at whose command they were reared. These tapering quadrangles, as they were the product, so they may be viewed as the proper images of a pure despotism; vast in the surface it covers, and the materials it combines, the prodigious mass serves only to give towering altitude to—a point.

A literature like that of Greece would have protected the Egyptians from the toils of building pyramids: had they possessed poets like Homer, historians like Thucydides, and philosophers like Aristotle, their kings would neither have dared, nor have wished to attach their fame to bare bulks of stone, displaying no trace of genius, either in the design or the

execution. The Egyptian kings committed their names to pyramids, which have long since betrayed the trust.—The Greeks consigned the renown of their chiefs to the frail papyrus of the Nile, and the record still endures.

The accordance of the taste displayed in the forms and embellishments of the Egyptian temples, with the temperament and institutions of the people, as described by historians, just deserves to be noticed; though, of course, no very positive conclusions ought to be drawn from facts of this class. It is the province of art, whatever may be the material upon which it works, to combine in various proportions the two elements of effect—sameness and difference—uniformity and variety—harmony and opposition. A work of art in which these principles should be wholly disjoined, or which should exhibit only one of them, if that were possible, might amaze the spectator, but could never produce pleasure. To combine them in exact accordance with the intended effect of the work, is the perfection of art. If the impression to be produced inclines to the side of grandeur and sublimity, the principle of sameness or uniformity must predominate; and every variety that is admitted in the embellishments, must be quelled by constant repetitions of the same form. But if the sentiment to be

awakened is that of pleasure, gaiety, and voluptuousness, the second principle, or that of difference, variety, and opposition, must triumph over the first. Now a uniform preference of one of these styles in works of art, must be held to characterize the temper of the people whom they are intended to please.

The Egyptian architecture is distinguished, perhaps beyond that of any other people, by its subjection to the law of uniformity, and by the apparent aim of the artist to vanquish the imagination of the spectator by an aspect of sublimity; the sentiment of awe was the intention; bulk and sameness were the means.

This character of Egyptian art, which prevails almost without exception in all the existing remains, comports well with the idea of an absolute subjugation of the people beneath a system of religious and civil despotism. But it has a remarkable significance when considered in connection with the peculiar nature of the worship to which these temples were devoted. While we gaze with wonder and awe at the massy buttresses of these structures, at their towering obelisks, at their long ranges of columns, formed as if to support the weight of mountains, and at the colossal guards of the portico, we have to recollect that these temples were the consecrated palaces of crocodiles, of cows, of ichneumons, of dogs, cats, or apes.

It seems as if, for the purpose of effecting the most complete degradation of the popular mind, the superstition had been framed from the vilest materials it was possible to choose; while, to enhance and secure its influence, a nobly imagined art combined every element of awful grandeur. The imagination was seduced by a show of sublimity, in order that the moral sense might, the more effectually, be trodden in the dust.

We pass by the mathematical ornaments, and the vegetable imitations of the Egyptian architecture, which, besides being admirably imagined and executed, are all in perfect harmony with the general taste of the buildings. But the character of the human figures attached to many of the temples, demands a passing notice.

Not a few of these human figures exhibit a high degree of excellence within certain bounds; these bounds are a strict adherence to the national contour and costume (neither of which could have been preferred by artists who had seen the people of Europe and Asia), and a rigid observance of architectural directness of position. In a very few extant examples, the artists so far transgressed the rules imposed upon them, as to prove that they had the command of attitudes more varied than those they ordinarily exhibited; indeed, it is

contrary to all analogy to suppose, that so much executive talent should exist along with an incapacity to give life and variety to the figure. The Chinese, who as artists are much inferior to the ancient Egyptian sculptors, ordinarily pass far beyond them in the range of action and position which they give to their human figures. If a taste so rigid had belonged to the first stage of art, it must, unless otherwise restricted, have soon admitted amelioration. The artists of a second age would have sought reputation by venturing beyond the limits within which their predecessors were confined.

It seems then hardly possible to explain the frozen uniformity exhibited by the Egyptian sculptures, except by supposing that art, like every thing else, was the slave of a perfect despotism. The human forms supporting the porticos or roofs, all stand and look as if in the presence of superior power. Freedom of position, or an attitude of force, of agility, or even of inattentive repose, or any indication of individual will, would have broken in upon the idea of universal subjection. The master of Egypt must not look upon forms that do not speak submission.

And yet there is an air of serenity (though not such as springs from the consciousness of personal dignity) but such as tends towards

gaiety, in almost all these sculptures: the look is altogether servile; but it is unrepining, and seems to express acquiescence in that immutable order of things which transferred the rights of all to one.

That such a condition of the social system as this actually existed in the times when the Egyptian temples were reared, cannot be positively affirmed merely on the grounds above mentioned: but if, amidst the ill founded encomiums bestowed upon the Egyptian institutions by ancient historians, there may clearly be traced the indications of a state of unexampled subjection to fixed modes of action in the social, religious, and political systems of the people, the existing monuments of their architecture and sculpture must be acknowledged to accord well with these indications. If this accordance is thought to be fanciful, let it be attempted to associate our notions of the Grecian people and their institutions with the Egyptian architecture and sculpture.—No one could for a moment entertain together ideas so incongruous.

The Grecian architecture, though its elements were evidently derived from that of Egypt, may be contrasted with it in almost every point. The people to whom these comparatively diminutive, yet perfect structures belonged, manifestly were not the masters of

boundless wealth: but their intelligence so much exceeded their resources that they at once reached the ultimate point of art, which is to induce upon its materials a new value, so great that the mere cost of the work is forgotten. In surveying the Egyptian temples we wonder at the wealth that could pay for them; in viewing those of Greece we only admire the genius of the architect who imagined them, and the taste of the people who admired them.

The plains of Greece are burdened by no huge monuments whose only intention is to crush the common feelings of a nation beneath the weight of one man's vanity; but temples, the property of all—temples, free from the characters of gloom and of ferocity, adorned the whole face of the country.

A more striking point of contrast cannot be selected than that presented by a comparison of the human figures (above-mentioned) attached to the Egyptian temples, with those that decorate the Grecian architecture. The Grecian caryatides assume the utmost liberty, ease, and variety of position which may comport with the burdensome duty of supporting the pediment: they give their heads to the mass of masonry above them, not with the passiveness of slaves, but with the alacrity of free persons. The Egyptian figures stand like

the personifications of unchanging duration; but of the Grecian, one might think, that they had but just stepped from the merry crowd, and were themselves pleased spectators of the festivities that are passing before them.

The Roman architecture, compared with that of India or of China, is only so far less barbarous as it is more Grecian. In the arts the Romans were imitators, and are hardly ever to be admired when they wandered from their pattern. Those structures in which they might best claim the praise of originality—namely, their vast theatres, are much rather monuments of wealth, luxury, and native ferocity of character, than of taste or intelligence.

The structures which shed the greatest lustre upon the Roman name, are those public works—roads, bridges, and aqueducts, which every where mark the presence of their legions; and these attest that vigour of character, that unconquerable perseverance, that regard to utility, and especially that steady pursuit of universal empire, which history declares to have characterized the Roman people and government.

The student of history, though he may not have access to museums, and though costly antiquarian publications should never come into his possession, may find, even in his seclusion,

some visible and palpable proofs of the authenticity of the Roman historians; for the circuit of a few miles in almost every district of the British Islands will offer illustrations of the narratives of Cæsar, of Tacitus, and of Suetonius. Though the occupation of Britain by the Romans was of shorter continuance than that of almost any other country included within the empire, and though their possession of the island was partial and disturbed, they made themselves so much at home with our ancestors that our soil teems with the relics of their visit of three hundred years. Roman camps, roads, walls, and baths;—mosaics, vases, weapons, utensils, and coins, are as abundant almost in England as in Italy; and quite abundant enough to substantiate the proud glories claimed for the Roman arms by their historians.

---

If then it were possible to entertain a doubt of the authenticity of the body of ancient history, taken in the mass; or if the credibility of a particular author is questioned; or if some single fact is open to controversy, we

are not left to rely alone upon the validity of general arguments in proof of the apparent competency, veracity, and impartiality of the ancient historians; but may, in almost all cases, appeal to unquestionable facts, supporting the affirmative side of such questions. We may compare the testimony of the historians themselves, one with another, or with that of contemporary writers in other departments of literature, whose allusions to public events or persons are of an incidental kind; or we may compare the descriptions given by historians of natural objects, or of national peculiarities, with the same objects or peculiarities still existing; or, to take a method still more precise and palpably certain, we may read upon marbles, or upon brass, or gold, or silver, long buried in the earth, explicit records of the very events, or memorials of the very persons, mentioned by historians. Or we may examine the remains of public works and buildings described by the historians, and according with their accounts of the power, tastes, and habits of the people who reared them.

With all these various means of proof there may yet remain some few points of history not satisfactorily attested, or liable to reasonable suspicion; but the great mass of facts

will be so fully established as to render scepticism altogether absurd.

But the proof which establishes the general authenticity of the ancient historians, and which demonstrates that these writings are, in the main, what they profess to be—that is, genuine narratives of events, composed and published in the age to which they are usually assigned, carries with it by implication a proof of the genuineness of all other remains of ancient literature. If, for example, we have under our touch palpable evidence that the works of Tacitus are genuine and authentic, we can no longer deny that the raft on which ancient books floated down through so many ages was substantially secure, and that whatever mists may seem to hang over some parts of the channel of transmission, the vessel and its cargo did actually pass undamaged through the gloom.

Though this inference is applicable to the remains of ancient literature more in the mass than in detail; it possesses a conclusive force, against all vague and sweeping attacks upon the genuineness and integrity of ancient writings, as if incapable of certain proof. Those who profess to entertain doubts of this sort, do not ordinarily apply themselves with assiduous care to the examination of any one

instance, or patiently refute particular proofs; but rather fling about broad assertions, tending to destroy all confidence in the process and medium by which the records of antiquity have been conveyed to modern times. Now to such general insinuations, we offer a full and sufficient reply when we adduce demonstrative proof of the authenticity of historical works which could not have contained consistent and circumstantial truth unless actually written in the age they pretend to. If then *some* books have descended entire through eighteen or twenty centuries, others may have done so; and no objection can be maintained against ancient books *a priori;* nor can any suspicion rest upon particular works except such as may be justified by some specific proof of spuriousness.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES, APPLICABLE TO QUESTIONS OF GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY.

Civilization has not ordinarily, if ever, sprung up spontaneously in any land; but a germ of the arts and of literature, transmitted from people to people, and passed down from age to age, has taken root and become prolific, in a degree generally proportioned to the amount and variety of those elements of social and intellectual improvement that have been received from distant sources.

These germs of civilization may have been transported and scattered by colonization, trade, or conquest; but they never so fully expand as when cherished by an imported literature. It is not by comparing themselves with themselves that individuals or nations become wise; and though there are efforts of genius which seem to owe nothing to extraneous sources, the general perfectionment of

reason and of taste can only be attained by an extended knowledge of what has been thought and performed by men of other nations and of other times.

Of all the inestimable advantages which raise the inhabitants of England and of France above those of Turkey or of China, very few can be named that have not, directly or indirectly, sprung from a knowledge of the civilization, arts, and literature of ancient nations. What would be left to the people of Europe if all this knowledge, and all its remotest consequences, could be at once subtracted from their religious, political, and intellectual condition? But it must be remembered that it is chiefly by *the transmission of books* from age to age that this yeast of civilization is possessed and enjoyed. If those works which we believe to be genuine are not so, we may be said to hold all the blessings of social and intellectual advancement by a forged title. For on such a supposition the first stock or rudiments of our advantages have sprung from a mass of fabrications. No one entertains such a supposition; yet it must be admitted if any *general* objections are to be admitted against the mode in which ancient literature has been transmitted to modern times.

Such general objections are never formally made or insinuated in relation to the remains

of classic literature, for two reasons;—first, because an attempt to support a sceptical doctrine of this sort would be treated by the *learned* with silent contempt, as proceeding only from a whimsical love of paradox, or from an inane ambition to attract attention; and secondly, because the *unlearned* could never be induced to take interest enough in a controversy on such a subject to reward the pains of those who might attempt to delude them.

But it is quite otherwise in relation to the Holy Scriptures; for while some few of the learned are, from corrupt motives, willing to aid an attempt to bring the authority of these books into suspicion, there are always thousands of the community who may easily be engaged to listen to objectors, and who, from their want of information and incapacity to reason correctly, are liable to every seduction.

Nor is it only the uneducated classes that are exposed to the artifices of sophists; for persons whose acquirements in general literature are respectable, seem sometimes to be perplexed by objections of a kind which, if levelled at the remains of classic authors, they would deem undeserving of a serious reply.

This strange and often fatal inconsistency may sometimes arise from the influence of

moral causes, which it does not fall within the design of this volume to notice; but it is also attributable to a want of attention to some common principles of evidence which, though they are so obvious and simple that it may seem almost frivolous to insist upon them, are never respected by objectors, and seldom remembered by the victims of sophistry. The most prominent of these principles may be classed under the five following heads.

## I.

Facts remote from our personal observation may be as certainly proved by evidence that is fallible *in its kind*, as by that which is not open to the possibility of error.

By *certain* proof is here meant, not merely such as may be presented to the senses, or such as cannot be rendered obscure even for a moment by a perverse disputant;—but such as, when once understood, *leaves no room for doubt in a sound mind.* And this degree of certainty is every day obtained in the common occasions of life by means of evidence that is fallible in its nature, and questionable in all its parts *separately* considered. A person, for example, receives letters from several of his

friends in a neighbouring town, informing him that an extensive fire has just happened in that place, by which the greater part of the inhabitants have been driven from their homes :—presently afterwards a crowd of the sufferers, bringing with them the few remains of their furniture, passes his door :—his friends arrive among them, and ask shelter for their families ;—the next day the papers contain a full description of the calamity. But human testimony is fallacious :—and it more often happens that men lie, than that towns are burned down :*—there is not one of all those who have reported the fact whose veracity ought to be considered as absolutely unimpeachable ;—many of them deserve no confidence ;—and as for the public prints, they every day admit narratives altogether unfounded.

This sort of scepticism on such an occasion, if it is supposable, could be attributed only to a degree of mental imbecility, not much differing from insanity. In other words, this degree of evidence is such as leaves no room for doubt in a sound mind, although the material of which it is composed, if we may so speak, is in itself fallible, and although all the parts of it, *separately taken*, might be rejected.

* The principle of Hume's argument against the reception of *any testimony* in support of alleged miracles.

Or let us take an example or two of another kind. It has been long affirmed by voyagers, and on their authority by the compilers of geographical works, and by the framers of charts, that, midway in the Pacific Ocean, there are several groups of inhabited islands. And the landsmen of England think these affirmations as certain as that two and two are four. But who does not know that voyagers are fond of bringing home tales invented to amuse the weariness of the passage, and published to win the wonder of the vulgar? It may just be imagined that some question of national importance, some argument for the remission of taxes, depended upon proving that such islands do not exist; and then let it be supposed that certain perverse and interested disputants are permitted to have the ear of the common people all to themselves: in such a case the proof of this fact, certain as it is, might be made to appear very questionable, or altogether unworthy of belief;—in a word, a trick of the government, contrived to wring money from the people.

Or again:—It is affirmed that some two hundred years ago the parliament of England quarrelled with their king, levied war against him, vanquished and beheaded him, and set up a republican form of government. But in proof of these facts we have no better evidence

than the testimony of historians: the whole story rests on the credit of old books or manuscripts; nor is there one of the writers who have transmitted the narrative that may not be convicted of some misrepresentation; and many of them are plainly chargeable with direct and wilful untruths. And yet the principal events of the civil war are, in the estimation of all persons of sound mind as certainly established as any mathematical proposition. The same may be said of innumerable facts much more remote or apparently obscure than those above-mentioned; but which are so proved that they cannot be questioned without doing violence to common sense.

The difference between the proof obtained by mathematical demonstration and that which results from oral or written testimony is not that the latter must always, and *from its nature*, be less certain than the former; but that the certainty of the former may be *exhibited* more readily and by a simpler and more compact process than that of the other. If it were denied that the three angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles, an actual measurement of lines, or the placing of two pieces of card one over the other, would end the dispute in a moment: or if the problem were of a more complicated kind, belonging to the higher branches of mathematical science, and

such therefore as could not be made plain to an uninstructed person by any means, or to any one by a very brief process, yet whoever chooses to bestow time and is capable of bestowing attention enough upon the demonstration, will not fail at length to be convinced of its truth; for all the parts of which it consists are certain, and their connection, one with another, is also certain. But the certainty that is obtained from a crowd of testimony, oral or written, does not result from the solidity of the separate parts, and the firmness of the cement which connects them; but from the irresistible pressure of the mass. The strength of mathematical demonstration is like that of a pier;—the strength of accumulated testimony is like that of the swelling ocean.

## II.

Facts remote from our personal knowledge are not necessarily more or less certain in proportion to the length of time that has elapsed since they took place.

An illusion of the imagination, taking its rise naturally from the indistinctness of our recollections of infancy, and from the subse-

quent obliteration of many of the records of memory, leads us involuntarily to attach an idea of obscurity and of uncertainty to whatever is remote in time. And besides; if the knowledge of remote facts has been imperfectly or suspiciously transmitted, if there is a want of proper evidence on any point of ancient history, then the distance of time does really decrease the chances of collecting *new* evidence; and therefore holds such facts in continued uncertainty.

But whatever is well and sufficiently proved in one age, remains not less certainly proved in the next, while all the evidences continue in the same state. Indeed, as we have before remarked, historical evidence often greatly increases in clearness and certainty by the lapse of time. If in the time of Leo X. it was certain that Augustus ruled the Roman world sixteen hundred years before that period, we have no need to deduct any thing from our persuasion of the truth of the fact, on account of the four centuries which have since elapsed. On the contrary the proof of it is much greater, both in its amount and in its clearness, now, than it was then.

The proof of the genuineness of books, even if it does not gather particles of evidence, remains from age to age unimpaired. Nor is the proof of the genuineness of modern works

more satisfactory, though it may be more abundant, than that of ancient books. We could not be persuaded that the Paradise Lost was written in the last century by some obscure scribbler; nor would it be a whit less absurd to suppose that the Æneid was composed in the tenth century, or the Iliad at any time subsequent to the invasion of Greece by Xerxes.

The degree of certainty attainable on any point of ancient history or literature is regulated, not by mere distance of time, but by the state of the world at the period in question; especially by the contraction or the diffusion of general knowledge. This certainty therefore rises and falls, becomes bright or obscure, alternately, from age to age, quite irrespectively of distance of years. In sailing up the stream of time, mists and darkness rest upon the landscape at a comparatively early stage of our progress; but as we ascend, light breaks upon the scene in the full splendour of a noon-day sun; scarcely an object rests in obscurity, and whatever is most prominent and important, may be discerned in its minutest parts.

## III.

The validity of evidence in proof of remote facts is not affected, either for the better or the worse, by the weight of the consequences that may happen to depend upon them.

No principle can be much more obviously true than this; and if the reader chooses to call it a truism, he is welcome to do so: and yet none is more often disregarded. With the same sort of inconsistency which impels us to measure the punishment of an offence, not by its turpitude, but by the quantity of injury it has occasioned, we are instinctively inclined to think slender evidence *good enough* in proof of a point of no importance; but the best evidence feeble, if the fact in question involves great and pressing interests. We are apt to think of evidence as if it were a cord or a bar, which, though it may sustain a certain weight, must needs snap with a greater. But the slightest reflection will dissipate a prejudice so utterly groundless and absurd.

It is very true that the degree of care, diligence, and attention, with which we examine evidence, may well be proportioned to the im-

portance of the consequences involved in the decision. A juryman ought indeed to give his utmost attention to the testimony that may sentence a prisoner to a month's confinement; but if he has the common feelings of humanity, he will exercise a tenfold caution if life or death is to be the issue of his verdict. This is all very proper; but no one capable of reasoning justly would think that if the proof of guilt in the former case has been thoroughly examined, and is quite conclusive, it can become a jot less convincing if it should be found that a new interpretation of the law makes the offence capital.

The genuineness of the satires and epistles of Horace is allowed by all scholars to be unquestionable; and any one who has examined the evidence in this instance, must call him an impudent sophist who should attempt to raise a controversy on the subject. Would the case be otherwise than it is, even though the proof of the genuineness of these writings should overthrow our happy constitution, or make it the duty of every man to resign the whole of his property to his servant?

The evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures has, for no other reason except the consequences involved in an admission of their truth, been treated with a flagrant disregard

of equity and common sense, to which no parallel can be adduced. The poems of Anacreon, the tragedies of Sophocles, the plays of Terence, the epistles of Pliny, are safe from all imputation of spuriousness or material corruption; but evidence ten times greater in its quantity, variety, and force, supports the genuineness of the poems of Isaiah, and the epistles of Paul.

This violation of common equity in relation to the Scriptures has been favoured by the mere circumstance of their having to be continually defended. It matters not how impudently false an imputation may be; the reply, though in the most absolute sense conclusive, begets almost as much suspicion as it dissipates. Herein consists all the strength of infidel writings; they call for a defence of that which is attacked, and this defence seems to imply that the question may fairly be argued, and that it is in some degree doubtful. Let the genuineness of the most indubitable of the classics be boldly questioned in a popular style, and defended in a form level to the mode of attack, and level also to the ignorance of the middle and lower orders, and the result would produce quite as many cases of doubt, as of conviction.

What course ought to be pursued, or which alternative adopted, if a case should arise

wherein evidence intrinsically good, should seem to support a narrative palpably incredible and contradictory to common sense, is a question that may well be left undecided till such a case actually presents itself. No such incongruity taxes our acceptance of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; for the miracles they report, wrought for purposes so wise and benign, accord with every notion we can antecedently form of the divine character and government.

## IV.

A calculation of actual instances, taken from almost any class of facts, will prove that *seemingly good* evidence is incomparably more often true than false.

By evidence *seemingly good* is meant such as, after an ordinary degree of examination, does not appear to be liable to any decided suspicion. However much of falsification and of error there may be in the world, there is yet so great a predominance of truth, that he who believes indiscriminately will be in the right a thousand times to one oftener than he who doubts indiscriminately. Habitual scep-

ticism implies almost perpetual error. Indeed, either to believe by habit, or to doubt by habit, is the symptom of a feeble or diseased mind. But the former is vastly more congruous to the actual condition of mankind, and to the ordinary course of human affairs, is more safe, is more reasonable, than the latter.

No man, unless his mind is verging towards insanity, acts in the daily occasions of common life on the principles of scepticism; for with such a rule of action in his head, he must retreat from human society, and take up his abode in a tub. The sceptic is not only an anomalous being among his fellows, but his scepticism is an anomaly even in his own conduct; it is a madness on one point, which of all kinds of lunacy least admits of cure.

Adherence to truth is as much an element of human nature as the love of kindred: and though the operation of both principles is liable to interruptions, such deviations from the impulses of nature must always be held to arise from the influence of some specific inducement. Wilful, difficult, and hazardous falsifications, prompted by no assignable motive of interest or ambition, if indeed such are ever attempted, need not be included in any calculation of probabilities. If, therefore, in listening to a professed narrative of facts, we have reason to feel secure against the most

common motives of deliberate falsehood; if, on the contrary, the veracity of the narrator is guaranteed by the circumstances in which he is placed; if, moreover, his testimony is confirmed by a fair measure of independent evidence; if it is uncontradicted by testimony of equal value; and if the whole case has been again and again scrupulously and anxiously examined by persons of every cast of mind—then, and in such a case, if indeed a remaining possibility of delusion exists, it is so incalculably small, that to take it up *in preference* to the positive evidence, is an infatuation of the extremest folly or the extremest perversity.

Now let the principle above-mentioned be applied to the existing remains of ancient literature. Among the works brought to light and printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there were not a few, though few in comparison with the whole, which were very presently discovered to be spurious productions—fraudulent imitations of the style of ancient authors. Though at first sight they seemed to possess a claim to genuineness, they were soon found to be destitute of all that external evidence which is collected from the quotations of subsequent writers; or a manifest failure in the attempted imitation of style, or some oversight in phrases or allusions, served fully to expose the deception. All these

cases are therefore excluded from the intention of our proposition; for they do not possess evidence of authenticity that is *seemingly good.*

Besides these obviously spurious works, there were a few whose claim to genuineness was good enough to justify some controversy, and which yet find advocates among scholars; though the majority of critics has returned a verdict of spuriousness. Now these doubtful works, inasmuch as their genuineness is not generally acknowledged, may also be excluded from our proposition; for the evidence in their favour can barely be called seemingly good.

Now after these exclusions have been made, who that is acquainted with the positive evidence that supports the genuineness of the unquestioned portion of ancient literature—who that has given attention to the controversies which have been carried on relative to doubtful works, and has seen the assiduity, the acuteness, the vast learning, the eager pertinacity of research, that have been brought to bear upon such questions, will dare to affirm that there are probably many ancient works, generally supposed by scholars to be genuine, which are in fact spurious? Every person at all competent to form an opinion on the subject will grant, that if there be indeed a chance that some of the standard classic authors, whose genuineness has never been doubted, are after

all, spurious productions, this chance is incalculably small—so small, as to leave nothing but flimsy paradoxes and perverse absurdities to those who, on such ground, should attempt to breed suspicion against them.

## V.

The strength of evidence is not proportioned to its simplicity, or perspicuity; or to the ease with which it may be apprehended by all persons.

In the mathematical sciences a great number of propositions are so simple and so readily demonstrated, that all to whom they are explained may be supposed to carry away an equally clear apprehension of their truth; but the higher departments of these sciences abound with propositions which, though not at all less certain than the simplest axioms, are demonstrated by a process which it may require hours, or even days to pass through. And among those who actually attend to all the parts of such a process, there will be a very wide difference in the kind and degree of conviction obtained of the truth of such propositions. Some, though they firmly believe the

demonstration to be sound and perfect, both because they have examined, one by one, the links of which it consists, and because they know it is assented to by calculators more competent than themselves, are quite unable, either for want of habit or of capacity, to *comprehend* the demonstration; or to perceive, by a single act of thought, the connection of the parts, and the real *oneness* of the whole. They have walked in the dark over the ground, groping their way from step to step, and are satisfied that they have arrived by a right path at a certain point, though they cannot survey the route.

But another calculator, long practised in all the modes of abstract reasoning, expert in leaping with certainty over intervals which others must slowly pace, and capable, by the force of native vigour and comprehension of mind, of holding in unison a multitude of connected particulars, will see the certainty of such operose demonstrations with as much ease as another finds in comprehending an elementary proposition. Yet the proposition which perhaps not fifty persons in Europe can, with full intelligence, know to be true, is actually as true as the axiom which the school-boy comprehends in a moment.

Now all evidence on questions of antiquity, whether historical or literary, like an operose

demonstration in mathematical science, is more or less remote from the intellectual habits and usual acquirements even of moderately well educated persons; and very far remote from the mental range of the uninstructed orders of society. The strength of our convictions, in matters of fact remote in time or place, must bear proportion to the extent and exactness of our knowledge, and to the consequent fulness and vividness of our ideas of that class of objects to which the question relates. By long and intimate familiarity with ancient authors, and by an extensive acquaintance with the relics of antiquity of all kinds, the imagination of the scholar bears him back to distant ages, with a full and distinct consciousness of the reality of those scenes and persons. Nor is this ideal converse with remote objects like that often produced by fictitious narratives; for such excursions of the fancy in unreal regions are disjoined from the rest of our ideas and convictions; but the ideal presence of an accomplished mind in the distant scenes of history is firmly, and by innumerable ties, united to the knowledge of present realities. The imagination does not flit on the wing of a fantasy from the real to an unreal world; but tracks its way with a steady step on solid ground, from times present to times past; and the

intelligent conviction of truth travels up to the farthest point of its progress.

To those who are thus conversant with history, all facts or events, literary or historical, if satisfactorily attested, are held in the mind with a firmness of persuasion which cannot, by any statements or any reasonings, however conclusive or perspicuous, be imparted to other minds; because neither its own powers of comprehension, nor its variety of knowledge, can be so imparted.

## CHAPTER VII.

### RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE EVIDENCE WHICH SUPPORTS THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Some copies of Quintilian's Institutions of Oratory, very much corrupted and mutilated by the ignorance or presumption of copyists, were known in Italy before the fifteenth century. But in 1414, while the council of Constance was sitting, Poggio, a learned Italian, was commissioned by the promoters of learning to proceed to that place, in search of ancient manuscripts, believed to be preserved in the monasteries of the city and its vicinity. His researches were rewarded by discovering in the monastery of St. Gal, beneath long neglected lumber, a perfect copy of the Institutions.

The manuscript was soon subjected to the examination of critics, collated with existing

copies, compared with the references of ancient authors, and ascertained to be genuine, and essentially uncorrupted. Yet the substance of the evidence on which this decision rests might be comprised in a page.

The abridged history of Rome, by Paterculus, has been preserved only in a single manuscript; and that one so much corrupted, that critics have despaired of restoring the purity of the text. And it happens that this history is quoted by only one ancient author—Priscian, a grammarian of the sixth century. Yet with all this scantiness of evidence, and this corruption of the only existing copy, the genuineness of the work is fully admitted by scholars. The style, the allusions, the coincidences, are such as to satisfy all who are competent to estimate this sort of proof. But if this proof were formally set down, and even if it were ever so much expanded, it must look very meagre; and, to uninformed readers, seem slender as a thread, and insufficient to sustain any important consequence. But scholars, in reading the book, feel that sort of conviction of its genuineness, which is experienced by a traveller, who has spent his life in passing from country to country, conversing with men of all nations; when he meets foreigners in the streets of London, he does not need to look at passports to know

whether these strangers, whom individually he has never before seen, are Swedes, or Hungarians, or Armenians, or Hindoos, or West Indians; the commonest observer scarcely hesitates on such occasions; but the old traveller feels a conviction which mocks at formal proof.

Excepting a few doubtful cases, the genuineness of classic authors is intuitively perceived by scholars, with a vividness and distinctness that is not at all dependent upon the direct and assignable evidence which must be adduced in reply to objectors. On this ground it may be affirmed, that if only a single manuscript, containing the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul, had been preserved, and if no quotations from these writings were to be found, competent and unprejudiced scholars (no practical consequences being implied in the question) could never doubt that these writings are in fact what they seem and profess to be. Besides the minute and indescribable characters of genuineness which meet the instructed eye in every sentence, an argument derived from the internal accordancies of the history and the letters, as exhibited by Paley in his Horæ Paulinæ, must be held to be conclusive, even in the supposed destitution of all external proof.

But although the external proof of the

genuineness of ancient books is, in a large proportion of instances, superfluous, it must not be disregarded; especially as it is the only evidence which can be fully presented to the apprehensions of general readers. Yet even this, when adduced in its particulars, is seldom duly appreciated; nor is it likely to produce its due impression, unless viewed in its place among facts of the same class. We propose, therefore, without troubling the reader with details which are to be found at large in many well-known works, and which he may be supposed to have in recollection, or within his reach, to direct him to a few principal points of comparison between the classical and sacred writings, in relation to the proof of genuineness and authenticity.

The Jewish and Christian Scriptures may then be compared with the works of the Greek and Roman authors in the following particulars.—

1. The number of manuscripts which passed down through the middle ages.

About fifteen manuscripts of the history of Herodotus are known to critics: and of these, several are not of higher antiquity than the middle of the fifteenth century. One in the French king's library (there are in that collection five or six) appears to belong to the

twelfth century: there is one in the Vatican, and one in the Florentine library, attributed to the tenth century: one in the library of Emanuel college, Cambridge, formerly the property of Archbishop Sancroft, which is believed to be very ancient: the libraries of Oxford and Vienna contain also MSS. of this author. This amount of copies may be taken as an average number of *ancient* manuscripts of the classic authors; some few have many more; but many have fewer.

To mention any number as that of the existing *ancient* manuscripts, either of the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures, would be impossible. It is enough to say that, on the revival of learning, copies of the Scriptures were found wherever any books had been preserved. In examining the catalogues of conventual libraries, such as they were in the fifteenth century, the larger proportion is usually found to consist of the works of the fathers, or of the ecclesiastical writers of the middle ages: next in amount are the Scriptures, sometimes entire; more often the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, or the Psalms, separately; and last and fewest are the classics, of which seldom more than three or four are found in a list of one or two hundred volumes. The number of ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, or

parts of it, hitherto examined by editors, is nearly five hundred.

If in the case of a classic author, twenty manuscripts, or even five, are deemed amply sufficient (and sometimes one, as we have seen, is relied upon) it is evident that many hundreds are quite redundant for the mere purposes of argument. The importance of so great a number of copies consists in the amplitude of the means thereby afforded of restoring the text to its pristine purity; for the various readings collected from so many sources, if they do not always place the true reading beyond doubt, afford an absolute security against extensive corruptions.

2. The antiquity of some existing manuscripts.

A Virgil (already mentioned) in the Vatican, claims an antiquity as high as the fourth century: there are a few similar instances; but generally the existing copies of the classics are attributed to periods between the tenth and fifteenth centuries. In this respect the Scriptures are not at all inferior to the classics. There are extant copies of the Pentateuch, on no slight grounds supposed to have been written in the second or third century: some copies of the Gospels belonging

to the third or fourth, and several of the entire New Testament, unquestionably made before the eighth. But the actual age of existing manuscripts is a matter of more curiosity than importance, since proof of another kind carries us with certainty far beyond the date of any existing parchments.

3. The extent of surface over which copies were diffused at an early date.

The works of the most celebrated of the Greek authors were certainly found in the libraries of opulent persons in all parts of Greece, and in many of the colonies, soon after their first publication; and a century or two later they were read wherever the language was spoken. But a contraction of this sphere of diffusion took place as the eastern empire was gradually driven in upon its centre; and during a long period these works were found only in the countries and islands within a short distance of Constantinople. As for the Latin classics, how widely soever they might have been diffused during three or four centuries, the incursions of the northern nations, and the consequent obscuration of learning in the west, very nearly produced their utter annihilation. Many of these authors were lost sight of for several centuries.

It is a matter of unquestioned history that

the Jews, with their books, had spread themselves through most countries of Asia, of southern Europe, and of northern Africa, before the commencement of the Christian era; nor is it less certain that wherever Judaism existed, Christianity rapidly followed it. Carried forward by their own zeal, or driven on by persecutions, the Christians of the first and second centuries passed beyond the limits of the Roman empire, and founded churches among nations scarcely known to the masters of the world. Nor were the Christian Scriptures merely carried to great distances in different directions; they were scattered through the mass of society in every nation to an extent greatly exceeding the ordinary circulation of books in those ages: those books were not in the hands of the opulent, and of the studious merely; but were possessed by innumerable individuals, who, with an ardour beyond the strength of mundane passions, valued, preserved, and reproduced them. And while many copies were hoarded in secret by individuals, others were the common property of societies, and were, by continual repetition in public, imprinted on the memories of all their members.

The wide, and, if the expression may be used, the deep and full circulation of the Scriptures, secured them not merely from extinction, but from corruption. These books

were never included within the sphere of any one centre of power, civil or ecclesiastical. They were secreted, and they were expanded beyond the utmost reach of tyranny or fraud.

4. The importance attached to the books by their possessors.

In a certain sense the religion of the Greeks and Romans was embodied in the works of their poets; but the religious fervour of the people never linked itself with those works, as the depositories of their faith: books were the possession solely of the educated classes; they were prized by the intellectual as the means of enjoyment. But Judaism first, and Christianity not less, were religions of historical facts: the doctrines and the laws were only inferences arising naturally from the belief of certain memorable events, and from the expectation of other events, yet to take place: the record of the past was at once the rule of duty, and the charter of hope. Their books were to the dispersed and hated Jews the solace of wounded national pride: to the persecuted Christians theirs were a title to "a better country," and a support under present privations and sufferings. If they are valued by the Christian of modern times who believes them to be divine; they were valued with a far deeper sense by the early Christians, who,

from the evidence of frequent miracles, knew them to be indeed the word of Him by whom all things consist.

The regard entertained by the Jews for their sacred books was of a kind altogether without parallel: the reverence of the Christians for theirs, if not more profound, was more empassioned, and produced a sentiment perfectly unlike any with which one might seek to compare it: the fondness of a learned Greek or Roman for his books, was but as the delight of an infant with his toys.

To this deep feeling towards the sacred writings in the minds of Christians was owing, not only the concealment and preservation of copies in times of active persecution, but the assiduous reproduction of them by persons of all ranks who found leisure to occupy themselves in a work so meritorious, and so consoling.

5. The respect paid to them by copyists of later ages.

We have seen that throughout the middle ages, though nothing like a widely diffused taste for the classic authors existed, yet there were at all times, here and there, individuals by whom they were read and valued, and by whose agency and influence so much care was bestowed upon their preservation as served to

ensure a safe transmission of them to modern times. But that the Latin authors at any time after the decline of the western empire received the benefit of a careful and competent collation of copies, there is little reason to believe. Of the Greek authors there were issued new *recensions* from Alexandria, while that city continued to be the seat of learning; and some measure of the same care was exercised by the scholars of Constantinople; yet even there the celebrated works of antiquity suffered a great degree of neglect during the last four centuries of the eastern empire.

But in this respect, as well as in those already mentioned, the text of the Scriptures, Jewish and Christian, has an incomparable advantage over that of the classic authors. The scrupulosity and servile minuteness of the Jewish copyists in transcribing the Hebrew Scriptures are well known; in a literal sense of the phrase, "not a tittle of the law" was slighted: not only, as with the Greeks, was the number of *verses* in each book noted, but the number of words and of letters; and the central letter of each book being distinguished, became, as a point of calculation, the key-stone of that portion of the volume. This unexampled exactness affords security enough for the safe transmission of the text; and if there were any grounds for the suspicion that the

Rabbis, to weaken the evidence adduced against them by the Christians, wilfully corrupted some particular passages, we have other security against the consequences of such an attempt.

The flame of true piety was never extinguished in the Christian community; nor can any century, or half century of the middle ages be named, in which it may not be proved that there were individuals by whom the books of the New Testament were known and regarded with a heartfelt reverence and affection. There were besides multitudes in the religious houses who, influenced only by a purblind superstition, thought it a work of superlative merit to execute a fair copy of the Scriptures, or any part of them; and all the puerile adornments which the arts of the times afforded, were lavished to express the veneration of the scribe for the subject of his labours.

And more than this;—the Scriptures, especially in the first eight centuries, underwent several careful and skilful revisions in the hands of learned and able men, who, collating all the copies they could procure, restored the text wherever errors had been admitted. The prodigious labours of Origen in restoring the text of the Septuagint version have been often described. The fathers of the Western, the African, and the Asiatic churches—especially

Jerome, Eusebius, and Augustine, with such means as they severally possessed, stopped the progress of accidental corruption in the sacred text, by instituting new comparisons of existing copies.

6. The wide separation, or the open hostility of those by whom these books were preserved.

This is a circumstance of the utmost significance, and if not peculiar to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, yet belonging to them in a degree which places their uncorrupted preservation on a basis incomparably more extended and substantial than that of any other ancient writings. The Latin authors were barely dispersed over the Roman world, and never in the keeping of separated nations, or hostile parties. The Greek classics were indeed, to some extent, in the hands of the western nations, as well as of the Greeks, during the middle ages. And, if any weight can be attached to the fact, some of these works were also in the keeping of the Arabians: but they were never the subject of mutual appeal by rival communities.

The Hebrew nation has, almost through the whole period of its history, been divided both by local separation, and by schisms. Probably the Israelites of India, and certainly

the Samaritans, have been the keepers of the books of Moses *apart from the Jews*, during a period that reaches beyond the date of authentic profane history. In times somewhat more recent the Jews have not only been separated by distance, but divided by at least one complete schism—that on the subject of the Rabbinical traditions, between the sect of the Karaites and the mass of the nation.

The reproach of the Christian church, its divisions, has been, in part at least, redeemed by the security thereby afforded for the uncorrupted transmission of its records. Almost the earliest Christian apologists avail themselves of this argument in proof of the integrity of the sacred text. Augustine especially urged it against those who endeavoured to impeach its authority: there never was a time when an attempt on any extensive scale, even if otherwise practicable, to alter the text would not have raised an outcry in some quarter. From the earliest times the common rule of faith was held up for the purposes of defence or aggression by the church and by some dissentient party. Afterwards the partition of the Christian community into two hostile bodies, of which Rome and Constantinople were the heads, afforded security against a general consent to effect alterations of the text. And in still later ages a few uncorrupted commu-

nities existing within the bounds of the Romish church, became the guardians of the sacred volume.

7. The visible effects of these books from age to age.

On this point also the history of the Greek and Latin classics affords only a faint semblance of that evidence by means of which the existence and influence of the Scriptures may be traced from the earliest times after their publication through all successive ages. The Greek and Latin authors indicated their continued existence no where beyond the walls of schools and halls of learning. During a full thousand years the world saw them not, governments did not embody them in laws or institutions, the people did not bless them. They were less known, less thought of abroad, than the ashes of the dead, than the bones, teeth, blood, tears, and rags of the saints.

How different are the facts that present themselves on the side of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures! The Jews, in the sight of all nations, have, through a well known and uncontested period of two thousand five hundred years, exhibited a living model of the venerable volume which was once delivered to them, and which still they cherish. And though

long since stripped of all that was splendid or cheering in their institutions, and though rent away from the visible part of their worship, and though blind, for the most part, to the moral grandeur of their law and of their prophets, they hold unbroken the crust or shell of the system described in their books. Whatever in their religion was of less value, whatever served only to cover and protect the vital parts, whatever was the most peculiar and the least important, whatever might have been shed without damage or essential change, has been retained by these wanderers; while all that was precious, except the sacred books, has been lost.

The Christian Scriptures have marked their way through the field of time, not in the regions of religion only, or of learning, or of politics; but in the entire condition, moral, intellectual, and political, of all the western nations. The public history of no period since the first publication of these writings is at all intelligible without the supposition of their existence and diffusion. If we look back along the past eighteen centuries, we watch the progress of an influence, sometimes marking its presence in streams of blood, sometimes in fires, sometimes by the fall of idol temples, sometimes by the rearing of edifices decked with new symbols; nor can the distant and

mighty movement be explained otherwise than by knowing that the books we now hold and venerate were then first working the overthrow of the old and obstinate evils of idolatry. It is needless to say that the history of Europe in all subsequent periods has implied, by a thousand forms of shameless hypocrisy, and by the constancy of a few sincere Christians, the continued existence of the Christian Scriptures.

8. The body of references and quotations.

The successive references of the Greek authors one to another, though amply sufficient in most instances to establish the antiquity of the works quoted, furnish imperfect aid in ascertaining the purity of the existing text, or in amending it where apparently faulty. A very large number of these references is merely allusive, consisting only of the mention of an author's name, with some vague citation of his meaning. And even in those authors who make copious and verbal quotations, such as Strabo, Plutarch, Hesychius, Aulus Gellius, Stobaeus, Marcellinus, Photius, Suidas, and Eustathius, a lax method of quotation in many instances robs such quotations of much of their value for the purposes of criticism. Yet after every deduction of this kind has been made, the reader of the classics

feels an irresistible conviction that this network of mutual or successive references could result from no machination, no contrivance, from nothing but reality; and that it affords a proof, never to be refuted, of the genuineness of the great mass of ancient literature.

But with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures this kind of evidence, reaching far beyond the mere proof of antiquity and genuineness, is ample and precise enough to establish the integrity of the *entire text of* the books in question. These writings were not simply succeeded by a literature of a similar cast; but they created a body of literature altogether devoted to their elucidation; and this elucidation took every imaginable form of occasional comment upon single passages, of argument upon certain topics, requiring numerous scattered quotations, and of complete annotations, in which nearly the whole of the original author is repeated. From the Rabbinical paraphrases, and from the works of the Christian writers of the first seven centuries (to come later is unnecessary) the whole text of the Scriptures might have been recovered if the originals had since perished.

If any one is so utterly uninformed as to suppose that this kind of evidence is open to uncertainty or admits of refutation, let him, if he has access to a good English library, turn

to writers of all classes since the days of Elizabeth, and see how many allusions to Shakespear, and how many verbal quotations from his plays, and how many commentaries upon portions or upon the whole of them he can find; and then ask himself if there remains the possibility of doubting that these dramas, such in the main as they now are, were in existence at the accession of James I. If these quotations and allusions were in amount a fifth or a tenth part of what they actually are, the proof would not be really less conclusive than it is.

9. Early versions.

For the purpose of establishing the antiquity, genuineness and integrity of the Scriptures, no other proof need be adduced than that afforded by the existing ancient versions. For when accordant translations of the same writings, in several unconnected languages, and in languages which have long ceased to be vernacular, are in existence, every other kind of evidence is manifestly superfluous.

In this respect hardly any comparison between the classic authors and the Scriptures can be instituted. For scarcely any thing that deserves to be called a translation of any of them, executed at a *very early period* after their first publication, is extant. In fact it was the

high importance attached by the Jews and the early Christians to the Scriptures, and the earnest desire of the poor and unlearned to possess in their own tongue the words of eternal life, which suggested the idea and introduced the practice of making complete and faithful translations.

The Old Testament exists, independently of the original text, in the Chaldee paraphrases or Targums, in the Septuagint, or Greek version; in the translations of Aquila, of Symmachus, and of Theodosian; in the Syriac and the Latin, or Vulgate versions; in the Arabic, and in the Ethiopic; not to mention others of somewhat later date.

The New Testament has been conveyed to modern times, in whole or in part, in the Peschito, or Syriac translation, in the Coptic, the Sahidic, in several Arabic versions, in the Ethiopic, the Armenian, the Persian, the Gothic, and in the Latin versions.

10. The vernacular extinction of the languages or idioms in which these books were written.

To write Attic Greek was the ambition and affectation of several of the Constantinopolitan writers of the third and fourth centuries; and to acquire a style of pure latinity, was assiduously aimed at by several writers of the

middle ages; and a few of them so far succeeded in this sort of imitation that they executed some forgeries on a small scale which would hardly have been detected if they had not wanted external proof.

But the pure Hebrew, such as it existed before the captivity, so entirely ceased to be vernacular during the removal of the Jews from their land, that the original Scriptures needed to be interpreted to the people ever after; nor is there any evidence that the power of writing in the primitive language was affected by the Rabbis, whose commentaries are composed in the dialects vernacular in their times. The Hellenistic Greek of the New Testament, which differs considerably from the style of the classic authors, and even from that of the Septuagint, to which it is most nearly allied, very soon passed out of use; for the later Christian writers in the Greek language had, in most instances, formed their style before their conversion; or at least affected a style different from that of the apostles and evangelists. The idiom of the New Testament, in which phrases or forms, borrowed from almost all the surrounding languages occur, resulted from the very peculiar education and circumstances of the writers, which were such as to make their dialect, in many minute particulars, unlike

any other; and such as very soon became extinct.

11. The means of comparison with spurious works; or with works intended to share the reputation acquired by others.

Imitations, whether good or bad, serve to set originals in a more advantageous light. The former, by calling into activity the utmost acumen and diligence of critics, by which means the evidence of genuine writings is cleared from suspicion and obscurity; the latter, by serving as a foil or contrast, exhibiting more satisfactorily the dignity, consistency, and native simplicity of what is genuine.

Several good imitations of the style of Cicero have appeared in different ages, and have called for so much acuteness on the part of critics as has materially strengthened the evidence of his genuine works. In like manner the celebrated epistles of Phalaris excited a controversy the beneficial result of which was not so much the settling of the question in debate, as the concentration of powerful and accomplished minds upon the general subject of the genuineness of ancient books, by means of which other remains of antiquity received the implicit sanction of retaining their claims, after coming within the reach of so fiery an ordeal.

Many bad imitations of classic authors have been executed, and some such are still extant, and sometimes appended to the genuine works. No one can read such spurious pieces immediately after becoming familiar with the genuine, without receiving from the contrast a forcible impression of the truth and reality of the latter. The life of Homer, for example, usually appended to the history of Herodotus, and claiming his name, though it has something of his manner, presents a contrast which few readers can fail to observe.

No good imitations, either of the Jewish or Christian Scriptures, have ever appeared; but in the place of that elaborate investigation which the existence of such productions would have called forth, other motives of the strongest kind have prompted a fuller and more laborious examination of the Scriptures than any other writings have endured.

Many bad imitations of the style of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, have been attempted, and are still in existence; and they are such as afford the most striking illustration that can be imagined of the proper difference in simplicity, dignity, and consistency, between the genuine and the spurious. The apocryphal books (which however are not, most of them, properly termed *spurious*) afford this advantageous contrast to

the writings of the Old Testament; and the spurious gospels, passing under the names of Peter, Judas, Nicodemus, Thomas, Barnabas, &c. to those of the New.

The preservation of these latter worthless productions to modern times, is rather an extraordinary circumstance, and affords proof of a fact, the knowledge of which is important in questions of literary antiquity, namely, that there were many copyists in the middle ages who wrote, and wrote, mechanically, whatever came in their way, without the exercise of any discrimination. Now there is more satisfaction in knowing that ancient books have come down through a blind and unthinking medium of this sort, than there would be in believing that we possess only what the copyists, in the exercise of an assumed censorship, deemed worthy to be delivered to posterity. It is far better that we should, by accident and ignorance, have lost some valuable works, and that, by the same means, some worthless ones should have been preserved, than that the results of accident and ignorance should have been excluded by the constant exercise of a power of selection. Nothing more pernicious can be imagined than the existence, from age to age, of a reverend synod of copyists sagely determining what works should be perpetuated, and what suffered

to expire. Happily for literature and religion, there were in the monasteries numbers of unthinking labourers, who, in selecting the subject of their toils, seemed to have followed the easy rule of taking—the next book on the shelf!

12. The strength of the inference from the genuineness to the credibility of the books.

Nothing can be more simple or certain than the inference drawn from the acknowledged antiquity and genuineness of an historical work, in proof of the credibility of the narrative it contains. If it be proved that Cicero's orations against Catiline, and that Sallust's history of the Catiline war, were written by the persons whose names they bear; or if it were only proved that these compositions were extant and well known as early as the age of Augustus; that they were then universally attributed to those authors, and universally admitted to be authentic records of matters of fact; and if the same facts are, with more or less explicitness, alluded to by the writers of the same, and of the following age, there remains no possible supposition but that of the truth of the story, in its principal circumstances, by which the existence and acceptance of these narratives, orations, and allusions, so near to the time of the conspiracy, can be accounted for.

In Sallust's history, some particulars may be erroneously stated; or the principal facts may be represented under the colouring of prejudice. In the orations of the consul there may be (or we might for argument sake suppose there to be) exaggeration, and undue severity of censure; but after such deductions have been made, or any others which reason will allow, it remains incontestably certain that, *if these writings be genuine, the story is true.* All the sophisms of a college of sceptics, in labouring to show the improbability of the facts, or the suspiciousness of the evidence, could make no impression upon the mind of any one who is convinced that the books are not spurious.

Nor is this inference less direct or less valid in the case above mentioned, than in any similar instance of more recent occurrence. It is as inevitable to believe that Catiline conspired against the Roman state, and fell in the attempt, as that the descendants of James II. excited rebellions in Scotland, or that Murat was for a short time king of Naples. In the one case, as in the others, unless the documents—all of them, have been forged, the facts must be true.

The principle upon which this inference is founded, admits of no exception; nor does the history of the world offer an instance that

seems like an exception. Narratives of alleged, but unreal facts may have been suddenly promulgated, and for a moment credited; or false narratives of events concealed by place or circumstances from the public eye, may have gained temporary credit. Or narratives, true in their outline, may have been falsified in all those points of which the public could not fairly judge; and thus the false, having been slipped in with the true, has passed by oversight upon the general faith. But no such suppositions meet the case of various public transactions, taking place through some length of time, and in different localities, witnessed by persons of all classes, interests, and dispositions, uncontradicted by any parties at the time, and particularly recorded, and incidentally alluded to by several writers whose works were widely circulated, generally accepted, and unanswered, in the age when thousands of persons were competent to judge of their truth.

No one, to recur to the example mentioned above, is at liberty merely to say that he withholds his faith from Sallust and from Cicero, as he might, on many points, withhold it from Herodotus, from Diodorus, or from Plutarch. Yet even in this case he ought to show cause of doubt, if he would not be charged with the frivolous affectation of possessing more saga-

city than his neighbours pretend to. But in the other, while in professing to doubt the facts, he cannot impugn the antiquity of the records, he only calls himself a fool by a very needless circumlocution. He who does not believe the narrative must either give an intelligible account of the existence of the writings on the supposition that the events never took place; or confess that, to his taste, there is a relish in absurdity which greatly excels the plain flavour of truth.

When historical facts which, in their nature, are fairly open to direct proof, are called in question, there is no species of trifling more irksome (to those who have no dishonest ends to serve) than the halting upon twenty indirect arguments, while the *centre proof*—that which clear and upright minds fasten upon intuitively, remains undisposed of. In an investigation, purely historical, and as simple as any which the page of history presents, what boots it to say that the books of the New Testament contain doctrines which do not accord with *our* notions of "the great system of things;" that they enjoin duties grievous and impracticable; that they favour despotism, or engender strifes; or what avails it to say that all the professors of Christianity are hypocrites, and that therefore the religion is not true? Can these objections, or any others of a like kind,

weaken that evidence upon which we believe that our island was once possessed by the Romans? But they have just and precisely as much weight in counterpoising *that* evidence, as in balancing the proof of the facts affirmed in the New Testament. If such objections were ten-fold more valid than sophistry can make them, they would not remove, alter, or impair, one single grain of the proper proof belonging to the historical proposition under inquiry.

The question is not whether we admire Christianity, or whether we hate it; whether we wish to submit our conduct to its precepts, and to abide by the hope it offers, or whether we are resolved to dare the hazards of its being true. The question is not whether, in our sage opinion, these books have been a blessing to the world, or a curse; but simply this—whether they were extant and well known through the Roman empire in the reign of Nero.

There are subterfuges and evasions enough, by means of which we may obscure from our minds (at least for as long a period as serious and continued thought, uninvited, usually endures) the plain inference which follows from an admission of the antiquity and genuineness of the Christian Scriptures. But contradiction may boldly be challenged when it is affirmed that, with a competent knowledge of human

nature, of ancient history, and of ancient literature, no one can admit, and in all its particulars realize the fact, that the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul, of Peter, of John, and of James, were written in the age claimed for them, and were immediately diffused throughout Palestine, Asia Minor, Africa, Greece, and Italy, and then reconcile himself to any supposition whatever, except that the facts affirmed in these books were true.

---

Theologians, after adducing the evidences of revealed religion, not unfrequently subjoin some sentiment like the following: "Evidence of the truth of Christianity, amply sufficient to produce conviction in all candid and honest minds, is afforded to us; and with this we ought to be content, even though it may fall short of that degree of certainty which must constrain the assent of every one who hears it. For it is the very intention of revelation to prove the moral dispositions of men, and to exercise *faith*."

That there is reason in such expressions is not denied; yet very few persons will hear them from the advocates of Christianity without imbibing a false notion of the real nature of the evidences in question. It is indeed quite true that the proofs of the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, though sufficient for the satisfaction of candid and sincere inquirers, are not such as must force the assent of all persons who hear them, whatever may be their stock of information, their capacities, their prejudices, or their inclinations. But now would it not sound somewhat jejune and prudish to make a formal concession of this kind in relation to the evidence on which we believe the story of the Norman Conquest, or the history of the reign of Alfred, or any principal fact of Roman or Grecian history? Or what would be thought of a paragraph of similar import at the close of a treatise on the doctrine of fluxions, advanced in reference to the more abstruse and difficult demonstrations of the science? We must think such concessions, though indisputable, rather misplaced, and likely to produce a false impression on the minds of uninstructed persons.

Yet there is precisely the same ground for making the concession in the one case as in the other. The evidence attesting the facts of the reign of Alfred, though abundantly suf-

ficient to convince competent and candid inquirers, and such indeed as can leave no room for doubt in the minds of unprejudiced persons, is far from being so palpable as at once to force the assent of all persons, however previously uninformed; nor is it so simple as to leave no room for sophistical objections.

Nor are the higher doctrines of mathematical science less the objects of *faith* to the mass of mankind, than the facts of history. Indeed the actual proof of their truth is much farther removed from the apprehension of all but a very few persons, than that of historical facts. But these high and incomprehensible doctrines are assented to, and their practical consequences confidently acted upon in the mechanic arts, because they touch none of the passions or interests of men; because it is known that the few who are competent to understand them are agreed in opinion; and because it is known also that whoever should impugn them, must at length be convicted of his folly and error.

But this sort of palpable and inevitable conviction cannot often be brought down upon the head of an objector to historical evidence. For the proof does not lie upon one line, which must be passed over, step for step, by every one who traces it; but is such as admits of a *turn off* at every particular; so that those who

scruple not to leap a difficulty which they cannot fairly surmount, are hardly ever to be overtaken in argument, or brought to confession of their error.

Remote historical facts, though incapable of that palpable proof which, by keeping sophists in awe, preserves the mass of mankind from deception, are capable of a kind of proof which no one who thoroughly understands it can doubt. Just on this ground then stand all the main facts of ancient history; they are inevitably admitted as true by all into whose minds the whole of the evidence enters; and they are believed or doubted, in every degree between blind faith and blind scepticism, by those whose apprehension of the facts is deficient, obscure, or perverted.

Whenever it is said that the events recorded in the four Gospels are presented to us in a form purposely adapted to exercise our faith, it should always be added, by way of illustrating the exact meaning of the words, that the events recorded by Thucydides and Tacitus are also presented to us in a form adapted to exercise our faith. Yet it would evidently be more exactly proper to say, that this sort of evidence is adapted to give exercise to *reason:* for *faith* has no part in things which lie within the known boundaries of the mundane system. And facts, intelligible in themselves, though

properly miraculous, are, when duly attested in conformity with the ordinary principles of evidence, as much a part of the mundane system, as the most familiar transactions of common life.

The Scriptures do indeed make a demand upon our faith; but it is exclusively in regard to facts which lie above and beyond the world with which we are conversant, and of which facts we could know nothing by the ordinary means of information. But our assent to miraculous events is demanded purely on the ground of common sense. The facts are as comprehensible as the most ordinary occurrences; and the evidence upon which they are attested implies nothing beyond the well-known principles of human nature. He then who does violence to the standing laws of the present system by rejecting this evidence, displays, not a want of faith, for that is not called for, but a want of reason. To one who affected to question the received account of the death of Julius Cæsar, we should not say "you want faith," but "you want common sense." It is the very nature of a miracle to appeal to the evidence of universal experience, in order that, *afterwards*, a demand may be made upon faith in relation to extra-mundane facts.

The mass of Christians are not often very accurately informed of the real nature of infidel objections. Yet a disadvantage results from this happy ignorance; for it may easily be imagined, by those who are not conversant with their works, that the deistical writers whose names are the most frequently mentioned, have laboured, and with some degree of success, to controvert the direct historical evidence of Christianity. This idea may be strengthened by perceiving that the advocates of religion, in reply to opponents, chiefly employ themselves in bringing forward this historical evidence. But in fact, and for a very good reason, well informed and accomplished sceptics have never, in recent times, troubled themselves with the direct proof of the religion they endeavoured to overthrow; but have taken their station at a distance, labouring to establish some abstract doctrine which should render the Christian system incredible *a priori*. Or if they have approached nearer, it has been only to make a skirmishing attack upon single facts, and to cast within the intrenchments of religion pestilent insinuations, which must communicate contagion, even though instantly removed.

The only writers who have attacked the evidences of Christianity on the ground of historical proof, have been such as were not more

regardless of truth, than reckless of character; and who, with the means of infinite mischief in their hands, have secured themselves against refutation by sheer effrontery. To men of this class it is as easy to make one assertion as another; and the readers to whom they address themselves are, in general, as little able to detect the most flagrant untruth, as the most recondite mis-statement; and are accustomed to admit, with equal faith, the prognostications of an almanack, the calumnies of a Sunday paper, and the lies of an infidel pamphlet.

What may be the best means for preventing or remedying the mischiefs produced among the lower orders by profligate impugners of religious principles it is not our part to inquire; but the nature of the evidence in question, and the thickened ignorance of those who are the victims of such seductions, would seem to suggest that, though corrected statements of misrepresented facts may sometimes be circulated with good effect, the only course which Christian teachers can follow with a confident hope of success is that of a bold and affectionate appeal to the conscience, and an urgent use of those arguments to which the heart responds.

But infidelity, secret or avowed, exists also in classes of the community whose error is not excused by their ignorance; and this

known, or supposed existence of infidelity among well informed men, is the occasion of uneasiness, and often the only ground of doubt, to many sincere persons who are fain to suppose that there must be some uncertainty in that evidence which persons more learned than themselves reject. Those who are perplexed by a difficulty of this sort might do well to remember that knowledge and intelligence are instruments productive of their proper effects only when fairly used. So far as they do not think, the best instructed are on a level with the most ignorant. There is no absurdity so palpable that it may not be current among the upper and educated classes, if interest or accident favours its adoption or support. Every page of history might furnish some proof of this assertion; and in every private circle may be heard the most flimsy paradoxes affirmed and defended by men whose knowledge, in their own line, is exact and comprehensive, and whose powers of reasoning, in their wonted track, are almost infallible. That well informed Englishmen, if such there are, should reject the evidences of Christianity, may seem surprising; but it is not more so than that well informed Englishmen, and many such there are, should still adhere to the errors of popery.

In the mass of mankind, educated or un-

educated, the connection between reason and opinion, on questions in which common interests and passions do not favour impartial inquiry, or in which they are opposed to truth, is slight as the slenderest film. The opinions of men reasoning without motive, or reasoning against inclination, acquire no weight or value by accumulation; the opinion of one is worth as much as the opinion of a million; and the bulk of votes swags, now to this side, now to that, as often as the vessel of the state tacks to the wind.

How much faith, or how much infidelity there may be in a community at any time is therefore a question perfectly impertinent to an historical argument, however interesting the inquiry may be on other accounts. The relative amount of belief and scepticism are varying perpetually in every country in which a free literature and much intellectual activity exists. In our own, great changes in this respect have taken place within the last thirty years: during that time faith and infidelity have, to a great extent, changed places in society. The English infidels with a few exceptions are not now, as formerly, the readers of Hume, and Gibbon, and Raynal; for those writers have lost almost all influence over men of education; but they are the readers of six-penny tracts, the squalid occupants of

hovels, whose profligacy and misery impel them to seek the dark consolation of believing that a few more years of suffering will launch them into an ocean of eternal forgetfulness.

In the middle classes also, among the pert, half thinking, half instructed young men of large towns, a sort of infidelity is not unfrequent, which, after deducting something for the influence of worse motives, is attributable to affectation more than to any other cause. It is a mere impertinence, and perhaps should hardly ever be met with serious argument; but rather discountenanced, as an indication of want of sense, or of profligacy of manners, or of perverted political principles; and most often of the three together.

There is reason to doubt if it be ever wise to treat flippant scepticism as we should deal with honest ignorance: but if argument and nothing less will content the sagacious doubter, it is plainly the part of the advocate of truth to insist upon removing the discussion from the confined ground of the evidences of Christianity, and to discuss the question on the open field of historical inquiry. Any other historical books rather than those of the New Testament should be selected as the subject of disputation; and when a conclusion is arrived at, the entire process of the argument should be transferred, piece by piece,

to the Gospels. As an historical question, Christianity is distinguished from others of a like nature by nothing, unless it be the multiplicity and the force of the evidence it presents. To ask therefore for proof of the facts recorded in the Gospels, and to leave the events of the same times unquestioned and unexamined, is an impertinence which the advocates of Christianity should never submit to—much less encourage, by a tacit acknowledgement that the evidence in the one case needs some sort of candour, or of *easiness*, or of willingness to be persuaded, which is not asked by the other. The Gospels demand a verdict according to the evidence, in a firmer tone than any other ancient histories that can be put to the bar of common sense. From those who are convinced of its truth, Christianity does indeed ask the surrender of assent to whatever it reveals of the mysteries of the unseen world; but to its impugners it speaks only of things obvious and palpable as the objects and occupations of common life; and in relation to matters so simple, it demands what cannot be withheld—the same assent which we yield to the same proof in all other cases.

In conducting an argument on the plan here recommended, all parties must clearly understand the obvious principle already adverted

to, and so often forgotten, namely, that the facts which belong to an historical investigation can in no way be affected, for the better or the worse, by the nature or consequences of the facts contained in the document. Whether the books attributed to Matthew, Luke, and Paul, contain an account of a revolt in a Roman province, or of an expedition against a Scythian nation, or of the rise of a philosophical sect, or of the life, teaching, and death of Jesus, and of the spread of his doctrine, is a matter of perfect indifference to the argument in which we are engaged. The substitution of one of these suppositions for another, would not alter the colour, style, or material of an ancient manuscript, or annihilate an ancient translation, or blot out paragraphs from Tacitus and Pliny, or justify the taking up an exception against the universal course of human affairs, and the universal principles of human nature.

If evidence differing not at all from that which is accepted in similar cases, and which in amount and validity would be thought ten times more than enough if the books in question related to merely political events, is not to be admitted; if a verdict is to be returned openly affronting every principle by which the course of human affairs is regulated, and the judgments of men directed, the true occasion

of so great a violence should be placed in the light. And no other account of the strange anomaly can be given than this, namely, that the supposition of the resurrection of the dead, which is the centre fact affirmed in these books, and which must bear all the burden of the argument, offers a greater outrage to reason than the rejection of the clearest and fullest evidence that history has ever accumulated.

Unless then it be thought by us "a thing incredible that God should raise the dead," there remains not even a pretext for questioning the authenticity of the Gospels and Epistles —the proof of which, in every separate part of it, far excels that of the best authenticated historical record of antiquity.

# APPENDIX.

# APPENDIX.

## I.

### SPECIMENS OF VARIOUS READINGS.

THE following specimens of those verbal differences that usually arise from the collation of several manuscripts of an ancient author, are taken from works that have suffered in various degrees, during their passage to modern times, from the inadvertencies, ignorance, or presumption of copyists. An important circumstance connected with the subject of various readings must not be forgotten, namely, that their paucity in any author is no proof of the purity of the text; for it probably arises, not from an unusual agreement of MSS. but from the scarcity of copies. On the other hand, an unusual number of small variations, so far from proving a great amount of corruption, most often arises from the number of existing MSS. and from the wide circulation of the work in an early age. In such cases therefore we possess both the most ample means for restoring the text to its pristine state, and the best security against wilful or extensive corruption. Several of the less noted of the Latin authors of which only two or three copies have hitherto been discovered, present manifest corruptions which there are no

means of correcting, except by conjectural emendations, which ought seldom to be admitted. On the other hand the text of the more celebrated authors, and of the Greek classics generally, is often accompanied with a startling list of discordant readings. But the choice they afford, and the light they throw upon the causes of variations, commonly leave the critic in little doubt as to the selection to be made. Modern critics, especially, availing themselves of the labours of their predecessors, and furnished with more ample means of comparison, and bringing also to the subject a more exact knowledge of the languages, and perhaps more good sense than the early editors possessed, have succeeded in restoring the text of most of the classic authors to a state incomparably more satisfactory than that in which they first issued from the press.

In a great number of instances the difference between one reading and another, is of a kind that cannot be made apparent, or not to any good purpose, in a translation; these being omitted, those which contain any difference of sense, or ostensible difference of construction, are given in the order in which they arise.

---

## VARIOUS READINGS FROM HERODOTUS.

### Book III.

| Cap. | *or,* |
|---|---|
| 1. upon the advice | upon taking counsel of |
| 4. Cambyses preparing an expedition | preparing an expedition, Cambyses |
| 5. which belongs to the Syrians | the land belongs to the Syrians |
| from hence is Egypt | from this, indeed, is Egypt |

| | |
|---|---|
| 8. Orotal | Ourotal |
| 13. other such like things | such like things |
| 14. they were there | they passed by |
| — and their necks | but their necks |
| 16. otherwise | but otherwise |
| 25. his troops to remain | his troops to remain there |
| 28. bears a white spot | a white spot |
| 31. administer justice to the Persians | administer justice to them |

---

## VARIOUS READINGS FROM THEOPHRASTUS.

The characters of Theophrastus have suffered more than almost any of the Greek classics from the ignorance, carelessness, or presumption of copyists. Many passages have been so much corrupted or mutilated that they are pronounced 'past remedy' by the critics. The following specimens therefore may be considered as extreme instances of various readings: they are taken without selection, as they occur, omitting those only which are not easily made apparent in a translation. Some of them, it should be said, are conjectural emendations.

### Chap. VIII.

| | |
|---|---|
| encountering a friend | meeting a friend |
| changing his manner | altering his looks |
| and what say you? | and do you say any thing? |
| have you any news? | how do you have it? |
| is there no later news? | and is any later news mentioned? |

| | |
|---|---|
| truly the news is good | is it not good news? |
| no one can except against | no one can forget |
| the report gathers strength | the report spreads |
| there was a great mess | there was a great slaughter |
| who knew the whole | who had seen the thing |
| and saying these things | and saying all these things |
| what at any time | what indeed at any time |
| what portico is there not | what portico is there |

---

## VARIOUS READINGS FROM FLORUS.

| | |
|---|---|
| Preface. about two hundred and fifty years | four hundred years |
| two hundred and fifty years | one hundred and fifty years |
| Book I. seven | fourteen |
| with blood and prey | to blood and prey |
| hence the temple, and Jupiter Stator | to him be a temple, said he |
| for the sudden occasions of war | for sudden wars |
| the fates of the people were submitted | the fates of the people were committed |
| grandson of Pompilius | son of the daughter of Pompilius |
| divided into wards | divided into wards of ten |
| the man from whom you have escaped | whom hardly you have escaped |
| with weapons so great | and with such weapons |

## VARIOUS READINGS FROM JUSTIN.

| | |
|---|---|
| Preface. which I have sent to you | which to you Antoninus, emperor, I have sent |
| Book I. Sesostris | Vexoris |
| Arbactus | Arbaces |
| among the shepherds was called Cyrus, | being imperious, was called Cyrus |
| conquered, and fearing for himself | conquered and forsaken |
| led him through | led him on |
| Book V. already Mindarus | already Mindarus at Sestus |
| Book X. he wished not to be king with his friends | he wished to be king with his friends |
| Book XI. the Athenians and Lacedemonians | the Athenians and Thebans |
| that the bridge might be stopped | that the bridge might be broken up |

---

If from the entire number of various readings in any author of whom eight or ten ancient copies have been examined, we subtract those which are purely grammatical —those in which a manifest error may readily be corrected —those which arise merely from a different division of letters or words—those which consist only in transpositions of words—and those which, though real differences, are so slight as to be hardly apparent in the closest translation; the remaining number of such as are important to the sense, would perhaps scarcely amount to one in fifty.

These important variations bear a much smaller proportion to the unimportant in those authors of whom a large number of independent MSS. has been preserved. Out of a hundred thousand various readings in the text of the New Testament, it would be hard to select one hundred which an English reader would think important to the sense of the passages where they occur. And in that hundred there would be not more than one or two which can in any way affect questions of fact, of doctrine, or of practice.

## II.

### RESTORERS OF LEARNING IN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES.

THE history of the revival of learning in the fifteenth century, does not belong to the design of this volume; yet a brief notice of those men of learning who most distinguished themselves in the laborious work of bringing the remains of ancient literature from their obscurity, and of presenting them to the world through the medium of the press, may seem proper as a supplement to the account already given of the transmission of books to modern times.

One of the first of those learned Greeks who brought the knowledge of the Greek language and literature into Italy, was Emanuel Chrysoloras, born of a noble family at Constantinople, about 1335. He was sent ambassador by the emperor John Palæologus, to solicit aid against the Turks from the European states: on this errand he visited England during the reign of Richard II. Soon after his return from this embassy, he again left Constantinople; and about 1391, came into Italy and taught the Greek language successively at Florence, Milan, Pavia, Venice, and Rome. While at Rome he was engaged in the service of Pope Martin V. and sent by him into Germany to fix the place for a general council, when the city of

Constance was agreed upon. Chrysoloras died a few days before the opening of that celebrated council, April 15, 1415.

Poggio, an Italian of good family, born 1380, at Terranuova, a small town in the Florentine territory, received his education at Florence under the instruction of John of Ravenna, and of Chrysoloras. To a thorough knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, he added some acquaintance with the Hebrew, and devoted the whole energy of his mind to literature. Under the pontificate of Boniface IX. he obtained the office of secretary to the pope, which he retained under seven successive pontiffs, during a period of forty years. While the council of Constance was sitting, Poggio, as mentioned above, was commissioned by some cardinals and nobles to proceed thither for the discovery of ancient manuscripts. His researches in that city and its vicinity were rewarded by finding in the monastery of St. Gal, a copy of Quintilian, and of Silius Italiculus. On the same errand, and with frequent success, he travelled through Germany, and visited England, where he staid some time, exploring many of the monastic libraries.

On his return to Italy, he married in open violation of the customs of the clergy; he nevertheless retained his office till his seventy-second year, when he accepted that of secretary to the republic of Florence. In the retirement of a country house near the city, he applied himself with renewed ardour to literary pursuits, and composed the greater part of his works. He edited, or prepared, the copy for editions of the two authors already mentioned, of several of Cicero's Orations, of Marcellinus, Lucretius, Tertullian, Valerius Flaccus, Probus, and of some other authors of less note. He also published Latin translations of Diodorus Siculus, and of Xenophon's Cyropædia.

Poggio wrote also a history of Florence, from 1350 to 1455. His humour was satirical, and he engaged in several angry controversies with the literary men of his times, especially with Trapezuntius and Laurentius Valla.

Theodore Gaza, a native of Thessalonica, came into Italy with other Greeks in 1430, when his country was invaded by the Turks. Having presently made himself master of Latin, he was engaged by Nicholas V. to translate several Greek authors into that language. On the death of Nicholas he went to Naples, where he was well received by King Alphonsus; but he dying soon after, Gaza returned to Rome, and availed himself of the friendship of his first patron, Cardinal Bessarion, a munificent encourager of learning, who bestowed upon him a benefice. Gaza, however, absorbed in his studies, so neglected his affairs as to be always poor; and, moreover, always at variance with his coadjutors in literary labour. He died at Rome, 1478. Besides his translations of Greek authors into Latin, he published some versions of the Latin classics in his native Greek.

Demetrius Chalcondyles, a native of Athens, and a disciple of Gaza, was invited by Laurence de Medicis to Florence, where he taught Greek. After the death of his patron, he accepted, from Lewis Sfortia, the offer of a professorship at Milan; but ended his days at Rome, where he had been employed by Nicholas V. in translating the Greek authors.

John Argyropylus left Constantinople in 1453, when taken by the Turks. He was made professor of Greek at Florence by Cosmo de Medicis, and appointed also tutor to his son Peter, and his grandson Laurence. Driven from Florence by the plague, he established himself at Rome as a lecturer upon the Greek language and philosophy. Like

Gaza, he employed himself chiefly in translating the Greek classics into Latin.

George Trapezuntius, a native of Crete, first settled at Venice, and afterwards came to Rome, where he long taught rhetoric and philosophy; translated the Greek authors, railed at the ingratitude of his Italian patrons, and quarrelled with his emigrant countrymen.

Francis Philelphus, of Ancona, received a Greek education from Chrysoloras; and taught the language in several of the Italian capitals. He was a most industrious student, a perfect master of the two languages, a poet, and translator of Xenophon, Plutarch, and Hippocrates.

Laurentius Valla, born at Rome, 1415, of a patrician family, distinguished himself by his zeal and ability in restoring the purity of Latin composition. In general learning and critical ability, Valla ranked high among his contemporaries. But his knowledge of Greek appears, from his translations of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Homer, to have been far from exact. Like most of the learned of that age, he lived on terms of rancorous animosity with his rivals, especially Poggio.

Angelo Politian, born at Monte Pulciano, in Tuscany, 1454, professed the Greek and Latin languages at Florence under the Medicis, to whose interests he was ardently devoted. He possessed more taste, vivacity, and genius, than most of his literary competitors; and had not his career been early terminated, would probably have effected more than any of them for the revival of learning, and the restoration of the ancient authors. In his translation of Herodian he was reckoned to have surpassed his author.

Hermolaus Barbarus, born at Venice 1454, was engaged in the earlier part of his life in public employments and embassies; but in his latter years made many translations,

edited a number of authors, and composed commentaries upon some. The works on which his critical labours were chiefly spent were those of Aristotle, Plutarch, Dioscorides, Pliny, and Pomponius Mela. He died at Rome, 1493.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, the lately invented art of printing had been brought to a high degree of perfection, and the principal cities of Europe were emulating each other in the splendour and extent of their literary undertakings. Editions of the classic authors, of the fathers, and of the Holy Scriptures, issued, in quick succession, from the presses of Rome, Naples, Milan, Venice, Mantua, Mentz, Strasburgh, Paris, Basle, and London. Among those who devoted themselves to these labours, none were more distinguished than the three Venetian printers, Aldus Manutius the elder, Paul Manutius, his son, and Aldus Manutius, the son of Paul. Aldus the elder was born at Bassano, 1447; and about 1488 established himself as a printer at Venice. Several attempts at printing Greek had before this time been made, but with so little success, that Greek quotations in Latin authors were not unfrequently inserted in printed books with the pen. Aldus applied himself with great zeal and ability to this object, and very soon issued editions of the Greek classics, which surpassed what had hitherto appeared.

Paul Manutius surpassed his father in learning and taste; and was succeeded by a son who maintained the reputation of the establishment. The reader who wishes to collect information relative to the state of literature, ancient and recent, in the sixteenth century, can hardly do better than consult the accounts (of which several have been published) of the Aldine editions. Of these accounts the most complete is that of Renouard, entitled, "Annales de

L'Imprimerie des Alde, ou Histoire des trois Manuce et de leurs Editions." 3 vols. 8vo. Paris, 1803.

The catalogues of the works printed during eighty or ninety years at the Aldine press, not only serve to show what ancient authors were discovered at that period, but afford a good criterion of the taste and spirit of the age, proving which were most in request; for the number of editions of each author is pretty accurately ascertained. Several of the classics passed through fifteen or twenty editions in the course of a few years. A large proportion of the Aldine publications consisted of collections from various authors; sometimes ancients and moderns, sacred writers and profane, were associated in the same volume. This practice was but an imitation of that usually adopted by the ancient copyists, who more often transcribed collections than single works.

Almost every year of the sixteenth century was marked by the publication of splendid and corrected editions of the classics; and critics, aided by the continued discovery of manuscripts, and by the advancement of learning, removed some of the obscurity, and supplied some of the defects that had unavoidably attended the first publication of authors from perhaps a single, or from inferior manuscripts.

Among those who distinguished themselves in these labours, the most noted were Joachim Camerarius, Henry and Robert Stephens, Turnebus, Scaliger, Budaeus, Vives, and Casaubon. But though these critics brought vast learning and great talents to the work of illustrating the classic authors, the true principles of criticism were either ill understood by them, or little respected. The editions issued under the sanction of their names, sometimes contained the unaltered text of former impressions; and often conjectural emendations supplied the place of a

laborious collation of manuscripts; while glaring solecisms of construction, which might with perfect safety have been corrected, remained unremedied. In the next age the work of emendation went on; but often influenced rather by a superstitious than an intelligent respect for the existing condition of the text of ancient authors.

But in recent times, the possession of more ample means, with more industry, more intelligence, and a more exact knowledge of the languages, have given to modern editions of the classics, especially to those issued in Germany and Holland, a degree of consistency which both facilitates the progress of the student, and enhances his pleasure in the perusal of these remains of antiquity.

The text of the Holy Scriptures has fully partaken of the benefits arising from an improved state of the art of verbal criticism. Indeed, so abundant are the materials of Scripture criticism, and so great the amount of learning, talent, and assiduity, that have been, during the last fifty years especially, concentrated upon this object, that the text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures may be affirmed to stand at present on the very highest ground of certainty and purity.

## III.

### THE JESUIT HARDOUIN.

Two or three lovers of paradox have, at different times, attempted to bring under suspicion the entire body of ancient literature, or a large portion of it. Among these no one has attracted more attention than John Hardouin, a French Jesuit, born in Bretagne, 1647. He early distinguished himself both by his extensive acquirements in every department of learning, and by the singularity of his opinions. In 1684 he published a work on ancient coins, in which he advanced many whimsical positions, plainly at variance with unquestionable facts, and yet recommended by considerable ingenuity, and by much learning. Stimulated by the notice which this and some other publications had excited, he more fully developed his system, the substance of which was, that, excepting the works of Cicero, Pliny's Natural History, Virgil's Georgics, and the Satires and Epistles of Horace, all the supposed remains of the Greek and Roman authors were manufactured by some Italian monks of the thirteenth century. This sweeping scepticism he endeavoured to support chiefly from the evidence of ancient coins, which, as he pretended, established facts and dates incompatible with the assertions of the works in question.

Hardouin was replied to and refuted by Le Clerc, La Croze, and others: he nevertheless adhered firmly to his opinions to the last; although he was constrained by his superiors of the society, who seemed to have been alarmed

for the credit of their community, to publish a recantation of his doctrines. This recantation was to the following effect. "I subscribe sincerely to every thing contained in the preceding declaration; (drawn up by the Jesuits.) I heartily condemn in my writings what it condemns in them; and particularly what I have said concerning an impious faction which had forged, some ages ago, the greatest part of the ecclesiastical or profane writings, which have hitherto been considered as ancient. I am extremely sorry that I did not before open my eyes in this point. I think myself greatly obliged to my superiors in the society who have assisted me in divesting myself of my prejudices. I promise never to advance in word or writing any thing, directly or indirectly, contrary to my present recantation. And if hereafter I shall call in question the antiquity of any writing, either ecclesiastical or profane, which no person before shall have charged as supposititious, I will only do it by proposing my reasons in a writing published under my name, with the permission of my superiors, and the approbation of the public censors. In testimony of which I have signed, this 27th of Dec. 1708, J. Hardouin, of the society of Jesus."

Notwithstanding this profession, the learned Jesuit continued, in his subsequent writings, to advocate his first opinions: he died at Paris, September 3, 1729. After his death some of his smaller writings were published, of which the most singular was entitled "The Atheists unmasked;" the design of which was to accuse the most distinguished opponents of the Jesuits of a conspiracy against religion: in the list of these Atheists are found the names of Jansen, Malbranche, Thomasin, Descartes, Regis, Arnaud, Nicole, Pascal, and Quesnel. It has been supposed, but perhaps on insufficient grounds, that Hardouin acted from the first at the instigation of his supe-

riors, who may be imagined to have wished, if possible, to throw mankind more completely into the arms of the church by removing all other authorities, and by destroying the credit of those ancient works which either plainly contradict the dogmas of the Romish church, or which cherish a spirit hostile to its pretensions. If such a design were formed, it was presently found so impracticable to effect it, that the Jesuits abandoned their tool to the contempt he had nearly drawn upon the body.

The scheme devised by this learned father, if absurd, was at least consistent with itself. He began by impeaching those remains of ancient literature, the genuineness of which rests upon the slenderest proof: if he had succeeded in destroying the credit of the Greek and Roman classics, and of the early Christian writers, there is reason to suppose that he, or some one labouring in the same cause, would have attacked the authority of the Scriptures; and if that attempt had prospered, the victims of religious despotism would have had no appeal left to them. If the records of antiquity could be robbed of their authority, intelligence, liberty, and religion, must presently disappear.

---

NOTE to pp. 10, 11.

The classic authors though brought from their obscurity in the early part of the fifteenth century, did not issue from the press till the close of it; and many of them not till the early part of the sixteenth century. The printed editions mentioned in page 11, though dated in the sixteenth, leave no room to question the antecedent existence of the works, which were then spoken of as being already known to the learned.

---

ERRATA.

For Chartas, pp. 52, 55, read Charters.
For Cataline, p. 117, read Catiline.