their mouths, and stood in attitude to blow  
them).

**7—12.]** *The first four trumpets*. It  
has been before observed, that as in the  
case of the seals, so here, the first four are  
marked off from the last three. The distinction is here made, not only, as there,  
by an intrinsic feature running through  
the four, but by the voice of the eagle in  
ver. 13, introducing those latter trumpets  
and giving them also a distinguishing feature. And as we there maintained [see note  
on ch. vi.8] that any interpretation, to be  
right, must take into account this difference between the four and the three, so here also. But in order to the taking into account of this difference, we must gain some  
approximate idea of its import. Does the  
intrinsic feature, common to these four  
plagues, bear a general interpretation which  
will suit their character as distinguished  
from the other three? I imagine it does.  
For, whereas each of those three [or rather  
of the former two of them, for, as has been  
observed, the seventh forms the solemn  
conclusion to the whole] evolves a course of  
plagues including separate and independent  
details, these four are connected and interdependent. Their common feature is destruction and corruption: not total, it is  
true, but partial: in each case to the  
amount expressed by *the third part*: but  
this fractional extent of action appears again  
under the sixth trumpet, ch. ix. 15, 18,  
and therefore clearly must not be pressed  
as carrying the distinctive character of the  
first four (on its import see note below,  
ver. 7). It is in the *kind* of exercise which  
their agency finds, that these four trumpets  
are especially distinguished. The plagues  
indicated by them are entirely inflicted on  
*natural objects*: the earth, trees, grass,  
sea, rivers, lights of heaven: whereas those  
indicated by the two latter are expressly said  
to be inflicted on *men*, and *not* on natural objects: compare ch. ix. 4, 15. Surely,  
however those natural objects are in each  
case to be understood, this is a point not  
lightly to be passed over. Nor can it fail  
to strike every unprejudiced student, that  
we must not, as is done by many expositors, interpret the *earth* and *grass* and  
*trees* as signifying nations and men in  
the former portion of the series of visions,  
and then, when the distinction between these and men is made in the latter part, be content with the literal meaning. With  
every allowance for the indisputable intermixture, in many places, of literal and allegorical meanings, all analogy requires that  
in the same series of visions, when one  
judgment is to destroy earth, trees, and  
grass, and another not to injure earth,  
trees, or grass, but men only, the earth,  
trees, and grass should bear the same  
meaning in the two cases. We may fairly  
say then, that the plagues of the four  
former trumpets affect the accessories of  
life—the earth, the trees, the green grass,  
the waters as means of transit and of subsistence, the lights of heaven :—whereas  
those of the last two affect life itself, the  
former by the infliction of pain, the latter  
of death.

A certain analogy may be noticed, but  
not a very close one, between these plagues  
and those in Egypt of old. The analogy  
is not close, for the order is not the same,  
nor are all particulars contained in the one  
series which are contained in the other:  
but the resemblance is far too striking to  
pass without remark. We have the hail  
and fire, the water turned to blood, the  
darkness, the locusts[, the infliction of  
death]: five, in fact, if not six, out of the  
ten. “The Egyptian plagues are beyond  
doubt remembered in the sacred imagery,  
if they are not reproduced.

The secret of interpretation here I believe to be this : The whole seven trumpets  
bring before us the punishment of the  
enemies of God during the period indicated  
by their course. These punishments are  
not merely direct inflictions of plagues, but  
consist in great part of that judicial retribution on them that know not God, which  
arises from their own depravity, and in  
which their own sins are made to punish  
themselves. This kind of punishment  
comes before us especially in the four first  
trumpet-visions. The various natural accessories of life are ravaged, or are turned to  
poison. In the first, the earth and its  
produce are ravaged with fire: in the  
second, the sea is mingled with blood, and  
ships, which should have been for men’s  
convenience, are destroyed. In the third,  
the waters and springs, the essential refreshments of life, are poisoned, and death  
is occasioned by drinking of them. In the  
fourth, the natural lights of heaven are  
darkened. So that I regard these first four