§ 1v.] MATTER, AND STYLE. [=ytropuction.   
   
   
 7. Here then is a plain indication, which has not, I think, been   
 sufficiently made use of in judging of the Epistles. The Spirit was to   
 testify of Christ: to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto   
 them. So that however much that Spirit, in His infinite wisdom, might   
 be pleased to impart to them of the details and accompanying cireum-   
 stances of the Lord’s appearing, we may be sure, that the truth spoken   
 by our Lord, “Of that day and hour knoweth no man,” would hold   
 good with regard to them, and be traced in their writings. If they   
 were true men, and their words and Epistles the genuine production   
 of inspiration of them by that Spirit of Truth, we may expect to find   
 in such speeches and writings tokens of this appointed uncertainty   
 of the day and hour: expectations, true in expression and fully   
 justified by appearances, yet corrected, as God’s purposes were mani-   
 fested, by advancing experience, and larger effusions of the Spirit of   
 prophecy.   
 8. If then I find in the course of St. Paul’s Epistles, that expressions   
 which occur in the earlier ones, and seem to indicate expectation of His   
 almost immediate coming, are gradually modified,—disappear altogether   
 from the Epistles of the imprisonment,—and are succeeded by others   
 speaking in a very different strain, of dissolving, and being with Christ,   
 and passing through death and the resurrection, in the latest Epistles,—   
 I regard it, not as a strange thing, not as a circumstance which I must   
 explain away for fear of weakening the authority of his Epistles, but as   
 exactly that which I should expect to find; as the very strongest testi-   
 mony that these Epistles were written by one who was left in this   
 uncertainty,—not by one who wished to make it appear that Inspiration   
 had rendered him omniscient.   
 9, And in this, the earliest of those Epistles, I do find exactly that   
 which I might expect on this head. While every word and every detail   
 respecting the Lord’s coming is a perpetual inheritance for the Church,   
 —while we continue to comfort one another with the glorious and   
 heart-stirring sentences which he utters to us in the word of the Lord,   
 —no candid eye can help seeing in the Epistle, how the uncertainty of   
 “the day and hour” has tinged all these passages with a hue of near   
 anticipation: how natural it was that the Thessalonians, receiving this   
 Epistle, should have allowed that anticipation to be brought even yet   
 closer, and have imagined the day to be actually already at hand.   
 10. It will be seen by the above remarks, how very far I am from   
 conceding their point to those who hold that the belief, of which this   
 Epistle is the strongest expression, was an idle fancy, or does not befit   
 the present age as well as it did that one. It is God’s purpose respect-   
 ing us, that we should ever be left in this uncertainty, looking for and   
 hasting unto the day of the Lord, which may be upon us at any time   
 before we are aware of it. Every expression of the ages before us,   
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