

10.
Thought of
the present
age.

In this sense of the word we have in the following treatise to deal with the History of Thought: not, however, with the history of thought in general, but with that of a defined period, with that of the present age and the age immediately preceding it,—the age, in fact, to which the writer and his readers belong, of which they have a personal knowledge and recollection more or less wide and intimate. It is the latter circumstance which has made me select this special portion of the history of thought; for it is that portion of which, it seems to me, I and my contemporaries should—if we go about it in the right way—know most. As every person is his own best biographer, so it seems to me every age is, in a certain sense, its own best historian.

11.
Contempor-
ary history,
to what ex-
tent possible
and valu-
able.

We know that this has been frequently denied so far as external events (that which many persons call history *par excellence*) are concerned. Contemporary writers do not, it is stated, get beyond mere records of events, records at once one-sided, incomplete, and confusing. It is indeed necessary to have the records in great number and variety: because the true and real record can only be given by him who combines all these many records into one, who avoids the errors arising from special points of view, from narrowness of outlook, from individual ignorance, blindness, or prejudice. Still, in spite of such defects, the contemporary records will always remain the most valuable sources for the future historian who may succeed in sifting their various testimonies, combining and utilising them to produce a fuller and more consistent picture of the bygone age. But while his work may be only temporarily valuable, theirs is