

lasting. It is hardly doubtful that, after hundreds or thousands of years have passed, the simple, detailed, and perhaps contradictory, narratives of contemporary witnesses will outlive those more elaborate and artistic efforts of the historian which are so largely inspired and coloured by the convictions of another—*viz.*, his own—age. For as Goethe has remarked: "History must from time to time be rewritten, not because many new facts have been discovered, but because new aspects come into view, because the participant in the progress of an age is led to standpoints from which the past can be regarded and judged in a novel manner."<sup>1</sup>

Most of the great historians whom our age has produced will, centuries hence, probably be more interesting as exhibiting special methods of research, special views on political, social, and literary progress, than as faithful and reliable chroniclers of events; and the objectivity on which some of them pride themselves will be looked upon not as freedom from but as unconsciousness on their part of the preconceived notions which have governed them. But where the facts recorded and the mind which records them both belong to the same age, we have a double testimony regarding that age. The events, and the contemplating mind, supplement each other to form a more complete picture, inasmuch as the matter and the medium through which it is viewed belong to the same time. And so it comes to pass that historians like Thucydides, Tacitus, and Machiavelli are looked upon as

12.  
Supposed  
Objectivity  
of histor-  
ians.

<sup>1</sup> 'Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre,' Werke, 2te Abtheilung, Band 3, p. 239. I quote from

the new edition, brought out by the German Goethe Society.