

of the experience, the inference may be made, whether longer or shorter, whether oftener or seldomer repeated—the conversion of the past into the future seems to require a distinct and independent principle of belief; and it is a principle which, to all appearance, is as vigorous in childhood, as in the full maturity of the human understanding. The child who strikes the table with a spoon for the first time, and is regaled by the noise, will strike again, with as confident an expectation of the same result, as if the succession had been familiar to it for years. There is the expectation before the experience of Nature's constancy; and still the topic of our wonder and gratitude is, that this instinctive and universal faith in the heart, should be responded to by objective nature, in one wide and universal fulfilment.

17. The proper office of experience, in this matter, is very generally misapprehended; and this has mystified the real principle and philosophy of the subject. Her office is not to tell, or to reassure us of the constancy of Nature; but to tell, what the terms of her unalterable progressions actually are. The human mind from its first outset, and in virtue of a constitutional bias coeval with the earliest dawn of the understanding, is prepared, and that before experience has begun her lessons, to count on the constancy of nature's sequences. But at that time, it is profoundly ignorant of the sequences in themselves. It is the proper business of experience to give this information; but it may require many lessons before that her disciples be made to understand, what be