

nature's phenomena—the air and the vapour and the heat which are the ministers of God, fulfilling His word, might perform, in the exercise of their own proper and characteristic virtues, their respective evolutions, without any change whatever in the effects which they produce or in the properties which belong to them.

24. But for a second example—the prayer for a prosperous harvest may be effectually answered, and yet not be answered by miracle. The ripened harvest does not immediately start into being, at the utterance of a word—neither is it made to rise to maturity in the midst of adverse weather and unfavourable seasons, or in the absence of all the genial and kindly influences, by which it is usually fostered. The prayer may be answered yet not by the vegetation being made to flourish in the midst of storms, where it never flourished before—but by the vegetation being made to flourish as it wont, under the smile of sunshine and in the midst of peaceful elements. The plenteous harvest is given, not without the usual antecedent of favourable weather—but with or rather by this antecedent. The responsive touch is applied as before to some anterior steps among the arcana of Meteorology, whence the Almighty, at His bidding, can summon the requested weather, and conduct all the subsequent trains to their final issue in the blessings of abundance—without the reversal of any sequences that in the platform of visible things are open to human eyes. He can by antedating his reply, as it were, at a point sufficiently high in the train of causation, summon into being, not the first