

CHAPTER IV.

*On the Impression produced by the Contemplation of
Laws of Nature; or, on the Conviction that Law
implies Mind.*

THE various trains of thought and reasoning which lead men from a consideration of the natural world to the conviction of the existence, the power, the providence of God, do not require, for the most part, any long or laboured deduction, to give them their effect on the mind. On the contrary, they have, in every age and country, produced their impression on multitudes who have not instituted any formal reasonings upon the subject, and probably upon many who have not put their conclusions in the shape of any express propositions. The persuasion of a superior intelligence and will, which manifests itself in every part of the material world, is, as is well known, so widely diffused and deeply infix'd, as to have made it a question among speculative men whether the notion of such a power is not universal and innate. It is our business to show only how plainly and how universally such a belief results from the study of the appearances about us. That in many nations, in many periods, this persuasion has been mixed up with much that was erroneous and perverse in the opinions of the intellect or the fictions of fancy, does not weaken the force of such consent. The belief of a supernatural and presiding power runs through all these errors: and while the perversions are manifestly the work of caprice and illusion, and vanish at the first ray of sober inquiry, the belief itself is substantial and consistent, and grows in strength upon every new examination. It was the firmness and solidity of the conviction of *something*