

gently, as the motion of a body from its place, if pushed, or the burning of a stick, if thrust into the fire. The knowledge that the former class of events *has* gone on, uninterruptedly, for ages beyond all memory, impresses us with a strong expectation that it will continue to do so in the same manner; and thus our notion of an *order of nature* is originated and confirmed. If every thing were equally regular and periodical, and the succession of events liable to no change depending on our own will, it may be doubted whether we should ever think of looking for causes. No one regards the night as the cause of the day, or the day of night. They are alternate effects of a common cause, which their regular succession alone gives us no sufficient clew for determining. It is chiefly, perhaps entirely, from the other or contingent class of events, that we gain our notions of cause and effect. From them alone we gather that there are such things as laws of nature. The very idea of a law includes that of contingency. “*Si quis mala carmina condidisset, fuste ferito;*” if such a case arise, such a course shall be followed,—if the match be applied to the gunpowder, it will explode. Every law is a provision for cases which *may* occur, and has relation to an infinite number of cases that never have occurred, and never will. Now, it is this provision, *à priori*, for contingencies, this contemplation of possible occurrences, and predisposal of what shall happen, that impresses us with the notion of a *law* and a *cause*. Among all the possible combinations of the fifty or sixty elements which chemistry shows to exist on the earth, it is likely, nay, almost certain, that *some* have never been formed; that some elements, in some proportions, and under some circumstances, have never yet been placed in relation with one another. Yet no chemist can doubt that it is *already fixed* what they will do when the case does occur. They will obey certain laws, of which we know nothing at present, but which must *be* already fixed, or they could not be laws. It is not by habit, or by trial and failure, that they will learn what to do. When the contingency occurs, there will be no hesitation,