

spheroidal form of the earth seems to have preceded all geological phenomena, and makes probable the condition of primeval fusion : and, following in the same train of thought, we have only to imagine another accession of heat, and the whole earth must have been dissipated through planetary space, and have appeared (were there then an eye like our own to behold it) as a mere expanded nebulosity.

Speculations like these, starting at least from actual phenomena, are not without their use. For, without lowering one jot the proof of a pre-ordaining intelligence, they point, through a long succession of material changes, towards a beginning of things, when there was not one material quality fitted to act on senses like our own ; and thus they take from nature that aspect of unchangeableness and stern necessity which has driven some men to downright atheism, and others to reject all natural religion.

If, then, our planetary system was gradually evolved from a primeval condition of matter, we may well believe, that every material change within it, from first to last, has been but a manifestation of the Godhead, and an emanation from his immediate will—Or we may suppose, that new powers have, by an act of creative interference, been impressed on it at successive epochs of its changes ; and that these new powers, working together with the old, *may* have brought about the next system of material conditions*—Or, if it be thought more in conformity with what we see of the modes of

* This second hypothesis (though perhaps less philosophical than either of the other two) is suggested by the analogy of the repeated changes of organic species, alluded to above, each of which can be regarded only as a positive creative interference.