

thought which seek for knowledge, truth, and insight through the patient accumulation of detailed research by the combined analytic and synthetic methods have, in one form or other, rejected this idea of the miraculous, seeing in it a break in the continuity and uniformity of existence and development which forms the openly or tacitly assumed postulate of all their reasoning.

The question of the supernatural or miraculous has been discussed from many points of view since David Hume wrote his celebrated 'Essay on Miracles.'<sup>1</sup> But the argument has considerably changed in the course of the nineteenth century: as much through the influence of philosophic as through that of scientific thought. In Hume's time there did not exist any clear and definite doctrine which set forth the nature and limits of scientific or exact reasoning. The conception also of laws of nature was not clearly fixed. At that time even the laws of motion and of gravitation were still subjects of discussion not only among philosophers but also among scientific authorities. Accordingly the point which Hume mainly discusses is that

<sup>1</sup> Forming the 10th section of 'An Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding,' first published (1748) anonymously with the title 'Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding.' This publication which the author desired should "alone be regarded as containing his philosophical principles and sentiments," remained, as he himself complained, obscure while the subject leapt into prominence through the "ferment on account of Dr Middleton's 'free enquiry into the miraculous powers

which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church from the earliest ages through several successive centuries'" (1748-1749). Hume's biographer, John Hill Burton, tells us ('Life, &c., of David Hume,' vol. i., 1846, p. 272) that though neglected in this country, "it will be found correctly set forth in a German biographical work, infinitely superior to any we possess in this country: Adelung's Supplement to 'Jöchers Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon.'"