

## CHAPTER II.

*On Laws of Nature.*

WHEN we speak of material nature as being governed by *laws*, it is sufficiently evident that we use the term in a manner somewhat metaphorical. The laws to which man's attention is primarily directed are *moral* laws; rules laid down for his actions; rules for the conscious actions of a person; rules which, as a matter of possibility, he may obey or may transgress; the latter event being combined, not with an impossibility, but with a penalty. But the *Laws of Nature* are something different from this; they are rules for that which *things* are to do and suffer; and this by no consciousness or will of theirs. They are rules describing the mode in which things *do* act; they are invariably obeyed; their transgression is not punished, it is excluded. The language of a moral law is, man *shall* not kill; the language of a Law of Nature is, a stone *will* fall to the earth.

These two kinds of laws direct the actions of persons and of things, by the sort of control of which persons and things are respectively susceptible; so that the metaphor is very simple; but it is proper for us to recollect that it is a metaphor, in order that we may clearly apprehend what is implied in speaking of the Laws of Nature.

In this phrase are included all properties of the portions of the material world; all modes of action and rules of causation, according to which they operate on each other. The whole course of the visible universe therefore is but the collective result of such laws; its movements are only the aggregate of *their* working. All natural occurrences, in the skies and on the earth, in the organic and in the inorganic world, are determined by the relations of the ele-