

before to-morrow as it is said that some stars of considerable magnitude have blazed up and gone out. We do not know that there may not be some enormously powerful and invisible magnet in the neighborhood which will attract the iron bar upwards with more force than that with which the earth pulls it downwards. But we do know that in millions and billions of cases expectations founded on the same sort of evidence as the expectation that the sun will rise to-morrow, and that the dropped bar will fall to the earth, have been verified, and that the imaginative illusion which half-educated people still so often indulge, that exceptions will occur, for the occurrence of which there is no rational evidence, is a most mischievous one, which we ought to try to eradicate. We ought to engage what I have ventured in this Society to call the "emotion of conviction," the caprices of which are so extravagant and so dangerous, much more seriously on the side of the uniformity of Nature than we have ever hitherto done. We should all try to distinguish more carefully than we do between possibility, probability, and certainty. It is not as certain that the sun will rise to-morrow as it is that I was cold before I entered this room; it is not as certain that Messrs. Baring's acceptances will be paid, as it is that the sun will rise to-morrow; it is not as certain that Peel's Act will always be suspended in a panic, as it is that Messrs. Baring's acceptances will be paid. And it is difficult for "such creatures as we are" to accommodate our expectations to these varying degrees of reasonable evidence. But though experience, however long and cumulative, can never prove the absolute uniformity of Nature, it surely ought to train us to bring our expectations into something like consistency with the uniformity of Nature. And as I endeavor to effect this in my own mind I certainly cannot agree with Mr. Ruskin that I have always been "expecting" the sun to stand still. Probably as a child I was always expecting things quite as improbable as that. But if I expected them now I should not have profited as much by the disillusionizing character of my experience as I endeavor to hope that I actually have.