

## FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN EVENTS.

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PREDICTIONS which have so far transcended the normal powers of the human mind, in the foresight exhibited, as apparently not to be explained by mere reference to the prophet's power to reason from cause to effect or from effect to cause, have been regarded as due to supernatural inspiration. Even those celebrated lines in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue referring to the approaching birth of a god-like child, which were written forty years before the birth of Jesus, impressed early Christian writers, and, we are told, contributed to the conversion of Constantine. Many prophetic expressions in the Old Testament have been regarded as of great evidential value in proving the Scripture to be a supernatural revelation. To prophecy theologians have appealed as one of the pillars of their faith. But now, when every phenomenon which has been carefully observed and studied has been divested of the special supernatural character it was once supposed to possess, the power of foreseeing coming events, even in the distant future, beyond the calculating, reasoning faculties of man, may be regarded, even though exceptional and super-normal, as being just as natural as any of the ordinary processes of the mind. Both theologians and sceptics may yet come to see that truth demands that they extend their considerations of prophecy, so that they may include the predictions of all countries and times, and not merely those of Judea some thousands of years ago, and that the predictions be considered and fairly judged without reference to the theory of special supernatural influence.

The question arises, How is it possible to foresee human actions which do not yet form any part of the order of natural events, and which in many cases have not been decided upon?

The law of causation is as true of the mental as it is of the physical world. Experience is valuable because knowledge of the past furnishes grounds for expectations in regard to the future. This is as true of experience of human conduct as of experience of the habits of the lower animals and the qualities of non-living things. The order of our thoughts is as "fixed" as the order of nature in general. This fact makes possible the lessons of history, the use of which, as an historian observes, "is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behavior."

The actions of individuals sometimes appear capricious; but so appear also some of the manifestations of force in the physical world. Why should our inability to co-ordinate any given mental phenomena with the sequence of natural events be proof of the absence of causation,