

time past, and either temporarily suspended or permanently changed. When we see a complicated machine in operation, and observe the perfect regularity of its movements, and the skilful adaptation of its various parts to their respective functions, we can no more doubt of the competency of the skill displayed in its construction, to alter or suspend its movements entirely, than we can doubt that its speed may be increased or diminished, by an increase or diminution of the moving power. The power to alter cannot be different from the power to make; or if it differ from it in any thing, it must be in degree, and not in kind; and if we allow the existence of a God at all—if we allow him to be the Creator of the universe—to have adjusted its innumerable and infinitely diversified parts, and to have subjected the whole to a system of laws, necessarily complicated in the highest degree, but never interfering with one another, it would be absurd to question his power to interfere with these laws, provided he has a sufficient reason for doing so; and to allege that such a reason cannot exist, is to assume the right to judge of matters of which we are not competent to decide.

There is nothing in the constitution of human nature against the truth of miracles, but an evident predisposition to admit of it. All nations and all ages have had their prodigies; and children, and all ignorant people, who are more completely under the original principles of their nature, are far more easily imposed upon than philosophers. We are naturally disposed to be credulous, and even to carry our credulity to excess; and experience alone corrects this habit, and renders us distrustful.

The point then to be considered is, neither whether it is possible for the laws of nature to be interrupted or dispensed with on a proper occasion, nor whether we are capable, according to the constitution of our nature, to admit the reality of an interruption or suspension of them, but, whether or not, in the nature of things, there can be such an occasion as this supposes. Now this is one of those problems which can only be solved by a reference to facts. It is rea-