

weather, and individual experiences, and historic events, that seem at first view free of all bonds ; but in the sky there is at all times the appearance, and, as it were, the proclamation, of persistent regulation and quiet conformity to irresistible statute that is soothing to the beholder. It is restful to look away from the "accidents" and "uncertainties" and inexplicable tossings of human affairs to the immovable calm and eternal fore-ordinations that so eloquently speak from their thrones of amethyst and gold.

In our time there is no disposition to question that at least all physical nature is under the dominion of law. Bible believers and unbelievers agree in this ; they only differ as to the source and character of these laws. The believer attributes them all to God, and insists that in addition to the natural forces that originally came from Him should be counted His own personal activity guiding and dominating the whole. The unbeliever excludes this supernatural element from the sum of forces. This is all the difference between the two. And a very great difference it is.

The laws of light, heat, gravity, motion are all capable of definite statement ; are all definitely stated in our text-books of science ; and the statements once made are good for all time. These elementary laws in their combination with one another give rise to more complex laws which regulate the movements of the heavenly bodies ; give the fixed succession of day and night, the fixed order of the seasons, the fixed periods of planets and suns, the fixed though somewhat elastic secular equations that modify within limits the periods of all the celestial orbs. As far as we have looked into the heavens (and that is now a good way) order *reigns*, order rooting itself in law. Constancy, subordination, government, harmonious co-operation—these are the features that to the instructed gaze are everywhere pushed to the front ; often limned as with a sunbeam, sometimes shaded and faded somewhat, but never disappearing nor becoming cryptograms. No astronomer fails to read them without difficulty in every part of the sky ; and to most they are about as evident though not as alarming as the characters which a Divine hand traced before the eyes of Belshazzar. As far as our researches have gone, law and order sit on thrones which only the hand of the Eternal can overturn ; and we are sure that future researches will reveal nothing different.

Once men were puzzled by what seemed the erratic planets. Their wanderings, apparently, were guided by no law. But the law was there, though it took astronomers some time to find it. But they found it unmistakably at last ; and now by its means we can forecast the positions of all the members of our solar system for ages to come, and at any moment turn our telescope on any one of them. Further, we have come to feel and to know that the astronomic Decalogue which rules in our system is only a specimen of that which rules in every one of the innumerable planetary systems that hide in the remoter heavens.

I do not mean to say that no miracle ever takes place among the astrono-