

competent judges, before being put forth for their instruction. But what we require now to know is, in what consists the belief, and how was it caused of those who first delivered them to the world as truths, and of all those inquirers who accept them as such from knowledge of the evidence. To say that they are truths, is to say that, taking any particular case of an object or idea, properly included as one of those to which the term forming the subject is applied, it would be found to possess the qualities, or, in certain circumstances, to pass through the changes, or otherwise to manifest the relations expressed by the predicate. Now it is clear that, if the general proposition were founded on the actual personal experience by our own sensations of every possible case coming under it, so that each instance of the application of the general statement must be one, or the exact copy of one of the instances upon which it was founded, then general truths must be of comparatively narrow application and limited use in economising labour or extending knowledge. Their great value consists in the general proposition, rule, or natural law covering a much greater number of cases than have been actually examined or perceived by the senses, and yet deserving our confidence. We assume, as sufficiently established by every one's experience, that what is found to be true in one instance will be true in all similar instances; that is, we assume the uniformity of the laws of nature, consequently that it is only necessary to show that a certain proposition expresses a natural law, in order that it may be confidently applied to every single case really falling within the rule. But the assertion of the uniformity of the laws of nature is only giving the form of a general proposition to the feeling of the mind, resulting from various and continued observation. We know nothing of laws of nature, as separately existing powers, exerting any controlling force; but we recognise them as expressions of the regularity with which effects are seen to follow causes, and, finding this regularity to prevail to such an extent in respect to cases of very different kinds, we are prepared not only to admit separately different laws as making part of the government of the world, but to adopt the general principle that the universe is regulated by constant laws, the knowledge of which is the best guide, on all matters to which they apply, for those who dwell in it: and this confidence in uniformity enables us, from a few good observations, to lay down a rule as to what may always be expected. Where the proposition expresses what will happen to a given sub-