no consultation ;—their course will at once be decided, and will always be the same, if it occur ever so often in succession, or in ever so many places at one and the same instant. This is the perfection of a law, that it includes all possible contingencies, and ensures implicit obedience,—and of this kind are the laws of nature.

(27.) This use of the word *law*, however, our readers will of course perceive has relation to us as understanding, rather than to the materials of which the universe consists as obeying certain rules. To *obey* a law, to act in *compliance* with a rule, supposes an understanding and a will, a power of complying or not, in the being who obeys and complies, which we do not admit as belonging to mere matter. The Divine Author of the universe cannot be supposed to have laid down particular laws, enumerating all individual contingencies, which his materials have understood and obey,—this would be to attribute to him the imperfections of human legislation ; —but rather, by creating them endued with certain fixed qualities and powers, he has impressed them in their origin with the *spirit*, not the *letter*, of his law, and made all their subsequent combinations and relations inevitable consequences of this first impression, by which, however, we would no way be understood to deny the constant exercise of his direct power in maintaining the system of nature, or the ultimate emanation of every energy which material agents exert from his immediate will, acting in conformity with his own laws.

(28.) The discoveries of modern chemistry have gone far to establish the truth of an opinion entertained by some of the ancients, that the universe consists of distinct, separate, indivisible *atoms*, or individual beings so minute as to escape our senses, except when united by millions, and by this aggregation making up bodies of even the smallest visible bulk ; and we have the strongest evidence that, although there exist great and essential differences in individuals among these atoms, they may yet all be arranged in a very limited number of groups or classes, all the individuals of each of which are to all