

would find it *optically* true in all its details. But how differently would not a revelation have fared, in at least the earlier time, that was strictly scientific in its details,—a revelation, for instance, of the great truth demonstrated by Galileo, that the sun rests in the centre of the heavens, while the apparently immoveable earth sweeps with giddy velocity around it; or of the great truth demonstrated by Newton, that our ponderous planet is kept from falling off into empty space by the operation of the same law that impels a descending pebble towards the ground! A great miracle wrought in proof of the truth of the revelation might serve to enforce the belief of it on the generation to whom it had been given; but the generations that followed, to whom the miracle would exist as a piece of mere testimony, would credit, in preference, the apparently surer evidence of their senses, and become unbelievers. They would act, all unwittingly, on the principle of Hume's famous argument, and prefer to rest rather on their own *experience* of the great phenomena of nature, than on the doubtful testimony of their ancestors, reduced, in the lapse of ages, to a dim, attenuated tradition. Nor would a geological revelation have fared better, in at least those periods intermediate between the darker and more scientific ages, in which ingenious men, somewhat sceptical in their leanings, cultivate literature, and look down rather superciliously on the ignorance and barbarism of the past. What would sceptics such as Hobbes and Hume have said of an opening chapter in Genesis that would describe successive periods,—first of molluscs, star-lilies, and crustaceans, next of fishes, next of reptiles and birds, then of mammals, and finally of man; and that would minutely portray a period in which there were lizards bulkier than elephants, reptilian whales furnished with necks slim and long as the bodies of great snakes, and flying dragons, whose spread of wing greatly more than doubled that of the largest bird? The world would