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SERMONIC.

GOD'S IDEA OF MAN.

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What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
—Ps. viii: 4.

Considered as a part of nature, man is insignificant. Without our modern knowledge of astronomy, by which the ancient conception of the universe is immeasurably expanded, the royal Psalmist, looking from his native Judean hills, as he watched his sheep through the stillness of the Oriental night, beneath the lustrous canopy which spread above him, was forced to exclaim, in his communing with Jehovah: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" Seen from some lofty height, as an object in an expanded landscape, man is but a speck in the wide field of vision. Compared even with his fellow-creatures of the animal kingdom, denizens of the jungle or the sea, he is but a weak and diminutive being. Lifted by the strong hand of the storm, or tossed by the waves of the ocean, he is like a feather on the tornado's breath,

or a leaf upon the rushing waters. Even the silent, invisible forces move him at their will, the sun's light extinguishing his vision, a change of temperature chilling his heart, the electric current blotting out all consciousness, and the unseen fever wasting him away as by the cursing touch of a magician.

As a product of nature man seems to possess a higher dignity. He is the last result of the vast systems of forces that play about him. Summing up in his composite being all the kingdoms of nature, the inorganic, the vegetable and the animal, as man does, the Psalmist could truly say, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; Thou hast put all things under his feet." Apart from man, apart from the consciousness and reason, that are his attributes, the glory of the visible universe has little meaning. What is the beauty of the earth, vast and wonderful though it be, with its oceans and mountains, its wealth of treasures, and its fertile plains, its forest solitudes, and its animated waters, without its rational inhabitants? What is the grandeur of the heavens, with their infinite space and innumerable orbs, their immeasurable energies

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