

THE GRANDEUR OF HUMANITY.

Everything speaks the intrinsic greatness of humanity. This vast world, fitted up on a scale of such imperial magnificence, on whose furnishing and adornment are lavished the resources of Divine wisdom and power, attests the nobleness of its occupant. The sun, pouring from his solitary throne a flood of golden light over the universe; the sky, bending over us its majestic canopy, all "fretted with golden fires;" the multiform elements, and the infinite variety of nature, all speak the greatness of him to whom they all minister. For nothing can be clearer than that all this boundless profusion of adornment, this exhaustless wealth of blessing, is primarily intended for man. Look at the curious adaptation of the eye to the light, and at the marvellous adjustment by which that minute and delicate little ball becomes a mirror for the boundless microcosm of nature. Look at the construction of the ear, and its capacity of receiving all the thousand melodies of inanimate and of animated nature. Look at the voice, with its capacities of endless modulation, its power to whisper, to speak, to shout, to scream, to laugh, to cry, to sing; and each of these with an untold variety of subordinate inflexions, and with the power, above all, of incorporating with these modulations thought and emotion, and of building up a world of human speech, answering to and even transcending the magnificence and majesty of nature. Look at the hand, which, with the aid of the entire body, and under the guidance of reason, can subject the mightiest powers, can tame the fiercest agencies, can draw forth all the capacities of nature, and accumulate on the earth untold treasures of beauty, power, utility, to minister to the wants, and fill the vast aspirations of man. Look at his æsthetic nature, answering to the myriad elements of beauty in the sights and sounds, the shapes and movements, the numberless hues, and the complicated harmonies of nature. Look, above all, at the godlike intellectual and moral faculties which distinguish man—at his power of observation, reflection, reason—at his capability to ransack all nature, draw forth her secrets, trace out her laws, build up

vast systems of science, rear on them vast systems of useful and elegant art: and thus, while he subjugates physical nature to his physical wants, sway her with a still mightier intellectual dominion, and evolve from the gross elements of matter an ideal universe, lighted by a brighter than the material sun, enriched with nobler than material treasures, and bounded by no such horizon as shuts down on the material creation. Who can doubt—irrespective, entirely, of the statements of Revelation—looking merely at the actual endowments of man, and the relations of subordination in which all nature stands to him—who can doubt that this mighty universe was planned, reared, furnished, decorated and upheld for man, and for such as he?—And who, then, can doubt, unless all nature is a lie, the grandeur of his origin and destiny?

Again, we infer the greatness of man from the greatness of his ruin. The depth of the fall can answer only to the preceding elevation; the capacity of abasement must be measured by the capacity of excellence. A plant may decay; a brute may become ferocious; but only a being, with the vast rational and moral capacities of man can climb to those heights, can sink to those depths of moral ruin which the history of humanity unfolds. What a profound nature must that be, the ocean of whose guilt and depravity rolls in every age and clime, dark and terrible, shoreless and fathomless! How potent, how grand must be those elements of being which are capable of such a terrible deterioration!

But yet again, even amidst all this ruin, what vestiges and reminders of man's original greatness! Even though a child of sin, and an heir of wrath—though enslaved by his lusts and passions, and clinging to earth with a guilty dread which dares not face the heavens, and its proper heritage, of immortality—even thus he still bears the unmistakable marks of his high origin and destiny. He still appears scarcely "less than Archangel ruined, or the excess of glory obscured." Still, his face erected confronts the heavens as with the lofty consciousness of his kinship with the skies. Still an inextinguishable sense of right within him attests the excellence of virtue, and wages an undying, though