

THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION AND GENERAL LITERATURE.

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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GENERAL LITERATURE.

GRANDEUR OF ASTRONOMY.

BY WILLIAM WIRT.

It was a precious evening in the month of May, and my sweet child, my Rosalie, and I, had sauntered up to the castle's top, to enjoy the breeze that played around it, and to admire the unclouded firmament that glowed and sparkled with unusual lustre from pole to pole. The atmosphere was in its purest and finest state of vision; the milky way was distinctly developed throughout its whole extent: every planet, and every star above the horizon, however near and brilliant, or distant and faint, lent its lambent light or twinkling ray, to give variety and beauty to the hemisphere; while the round bright moon, (so distinctly defined were the lines of her figure, and so distinctly visible even the rotundity of her form,) seemed to hang off from the azure vault, suspended in mid-way air, or stooping forward from the firmament her fair and radiant face, as if to court and return our gaze.

We amused ourselves for some time, in observing, through a telescope, the planet Jupiter, sailing in silent majesty, with his squadron of satellites, along the vast ocean of space between us and the fixed stars; and admired the facility of that design, by which those distant bodies had been parcelled out, and arranged into constellations, so as to have served not only for beacons to the ancient navigator, but, as it were, for landmarks to astronomers of this day: enabling them, though in different countries, to indicate to each other, with ease, the place and motion of these planets, comets, and magnificent meteors which inhabit, revolve, and play in the intermediate space.

We recalled and dwelt with delight on the rise and progress of the science of astronomy—on that series of astonishing discoveries, through successive ages, which display in so strong a light the force and reach of the human mind—and on those bold conjectures, and sublime reveries, which seem to tower even to the confines of divinity, and denote the high destiny to which mortals tend; that thought, for instance, which is said to have been first started by Pythagoras, and which modern astronomers approve—that the stars which we call fixed, although they appear to us to be nothing more than large spangles of various sizes, glittering on the same concave surface, are nevertheless bodies as large as our sun, shining, like him, with original, and not reflected light, placed at incalculable distances asunder, and each star the solar centre of a system of planets, which revolve around it, as the planets belonging to our system do about our sun; that this is not only the case with all the stars which our eyes discern in the firmament, or which the telescope has brought within the sphere of our vision, but, according to the modern improvement of the thought, that there are probably other stars whose light has not reached us, although light moves with velocity a million times greater than that of a cannon ball; that those luminous appearances which we observe in the firmament, like flames of thin white cloud, are windows, as it were, which open to other firmaments, far, far beyond the ken of human eye, or the power of optical instruments, lighted up, like ours, with hosts of stars or suns; that this scheme goes on through infinite space, which is filled with thousands upon thousands those suns, attended by ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, all in rapid motion, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, invariably keeping the paths prescribed to them: and these worlds peopled with myriads of intelligent beings.

One would think that this conception, thus extended, would be bold enough to satisfy the whole enterprise of human imagination. But what an accession of glory and magnificence does Dr. Herschell superadd, when, instead of supposing all those suns fixed, and the motion confined to their respective planets, he loosens those multitudinous suns themselves from their stations—sets them all into motion, with their splendid retinue of planets and satellites, and imagines them, thus attended, to perform a stupendous revolution, system above system, around some grander unknown centre somewhere in the boundless abyss of space,—and, when carrying on the process, you suppose that centre itself not stationary, but also counterpoised by other masses in the immensity of space with which, attended by their accumulated trains of

"Planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,
Wheeling unshaken through the void immense,"

it maintains harmonious concert, surrounding in its vast career, some other centre still more remote and stupendous, which, in its turn—

"You overwhelm me," cried Rosalie, as I was labouring to pursue the immense concatenation; "my mind is bewildered and lost, in the effort to follow you, and finds no point on which to rest its weary wing."

"Yet there is a point, my dear Rosalie—the throne of the Most High. Imagine that the ultimate centre, to which this vast and inconceivably magnificent apparatus is attached, and around which it is continually revolving. Oh! what a spectacle for the cherubim and seraphim, and the spirits of the just made perfect, who dwell on the right hand of the throne, if, as may be, and probably is the case, their eyes are permitted to pierce through the whole, and take in, at one glance, all its order, beauty, sublimity, and glory; and their ears to distinguish that celestial harmony, unheard by us, in which those vast globes, as they roll in their orbits, continually hymn their Creator's praise!"

INCIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

A FACT.

In the time of the Revolutionary struggle, I had a maternal aunt, residing in the far west. The country was but thinly peopled with whites, and the Indians were constantly committing depredations, laying waste their property, and slaying men, women, and children. One beautiful day my uncle, with several of his neighbours, was absent from his dwelling, tilling his luxuriant soil, to support his beloved wife and tender offspring, when a party of Indians came upon the village, with their horrid yells and sanguinary tomahawks. My aunt was alone, with one tender infant at her breast. The Indians immediately pillaged the house. They first took my aunt and seated her outside the door, with her babe, and then commanded her not to stir on pain of death. They proceeded to destroy beds, furniture, and every valuable which they could not conveniently carry away. My aunt sat some time stupefied with amazement and the deepest horror. But all at once, as if inspired by heaven, she betook herself to the woods. The Indians, in their eagerness for plunder, noticed not her flight. She ran as far as her strength would permit, and concealed herself between two large piles of logs. Her infant hushed itself in her bosom, and at last the direful day drew to a close. The Indians, after having destroyed all the property they could lay their hands on, set fire to every house in the village, and took captive every woman and child, who had not the good fortune to escape to the woods. But not satisfied

with their bellish work, before it was yet dark, they scattered themselves in every direction, in search of those who had made their escape. My aunt, by their horrid yells, discovered their approach, and most earnestly did she invoke the God of Israel that He would protect her, and not permit her child to awake from its unconscious slumbers. Israel's God heard her prayer. The babe slept still sounder, the Indians approached still nearer, she saw one of them climb upon the pile of logs opposite her, stretch his long neck with savage earnestness! Fear and the goodness of God kept her silent; he yawned in vain for his prey, and the whole party at length, with their plunder, withdrew. My aunt remained in this situation till late at night, when she heard the voice of affection calling in mournful accents her beloved name. She dared not stir or breathe, for fear of deception. But the voice drew nearer and nearer; and she could hear distinctly pronounced *Amelia, Amelia!* my beloved wife! are you here—do you yet live? She sprang from her hiding place, and in a moment the mother and child were entwined in the fond embraces of a husband and a father. Tears now found their way, and I imagine this was the happiest moment of their existence. They recovered themselves, lived many years, and finally died in the lap of affluence.—*Sentinel & Witness.*

TADMAR IN THE WILDERNESS.

TOWARDS the evening of the second day, they came in sight of the far-stretching silent ruins of Palmyra. At their approach, a troop of jackals started up from behind a fallen column, and galloped away among the surrounding rocks and stunted undergrowth.

The Arabs soon set about preparing supper; and after having partaken of the frugal repast, Wimgate wandered away to commune with himself in the solitude. The evening shades had fallen—the moon was aloft in the heavens, round and bright. The far waste was streaked with the shadows of the crumbling fabric. Temple after temple, colonnade after colonnade, pillar after pillar, stretching away in the dim distance, told the magnificence that once characterised the place. Where now were the vast multitudes that whilom thronged its gates?—where the gay revellers that sat long at the flowing board, and met nightly to mingle strong drinks?—where the frail but beautiful beings whose blandishments whited away the tedious hours of the royal princes and dissipated nobles?—where the prancing steeds and gay equipages, the swift chariots, that "raged in the streets, and jostled one against another in the broad way?"—where the thousands of wretched slaves, that wore out the prime of life in heaping up these monuments of the wise man's vanity? Ages since, pulverised, by the hand of time, into dust—the quintessence of the sovereign, the acrophant, and the slave, perchance, blowing about in the dust that the wind whirled up from the ruins, or springing in the stunted vegetation that struggles for life against the fiery beams of the desert sun—and their works are fast following them. How strange the contrast! The song of the voluptuous courtesan is changed for the hoot of the owl, as he sits in the shadow of the crumbling wall. The stealthy step of the jackal has taken the place of the roar of tramping myriads:

"And, happily, in the places of kings,
Some gaunt hyena laughing all alone,"

is the only representative of the wassail of the gay and dissipated.—*EXCERPT.*

LOVE.—Solid love, whose root is virtue, can no more die than virtue itself.