

For the Pearl.

TO SOLITUDE.

All hail, ye lonely groves, remote from noise,
Ye gloomy shades where peace and silence dwell;
For you, the world with all its fancied joys,
And visionary bliss, I bid farewell.

(Sweet Solitude) to thy retreats I speed,
Escaped from the impertinence of the prying eye
From the gay world and its enchantments freed,
Where baneful vices virtue far outvie.

To thy retreats where in the darksome grove
In pensive mood sits lonely philomel;
And while she mourns her sad unhappy love
Her plaintive murmurs swell the passing gale.

There let me stray in the sequestered bowers,
Where calm contentment fixes her abode,
In thy green walks adorned with blushing flowers,
At distance from the busy, bustling crowd.

No more bewildered in ambitious maze,
No more beset in folly's rapid stream,
No more deluded by the glittering blaze,
Of Honor, Riches, Equipage or Fame.

J. T. C.

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From the Quarterly Review.

ASTRONOMY.

Among those natural sciences which have called forth the highest powers of the mind, Astronomy claims for herself the most exalted place. The bodies of which it treats are of themselves calculated to prepossess us in their favour. Their vast and inconceivable magnitude—their distance almost infinite—their unaccountable number; and the rapidity and regularity of their motions, excite, even in ordinary men, the most intense curiosity, and to minds of higher birth hold out the noblest exercise for their powers. But while our judgment thus anticipates its pleasures and its triumphs, the imagination discovers among the starry spheres a boundless field for its creative energies. Drawing its materials from our own globe,—from its variety of life and beauty, and from the condition and destiny of our species,—it perceives in every planetary body a world like our own, teeming with new forms of life and with new orders of intelligence, and regards it as the theatre of events, whose origin, whose duration, and whose final cause, must for ever be involved in impenetrable darkness. Advancing beyond our own system, it recognizes in every twinkling star the central flame of new groups of planets, and pursuing its track only in one out of an infinite number of directions, it describes system beyond system, following each other in endless succession, till it returns exhausted in its strength, and bewildered amid the number, the extent, and the magnificence of its creations.

But while astronomy thus affords to our intellectual nature a field commensurate with its highest efforts, it is fraught with no less advantage to our moral being. The other sciences may, indeed, lay claim to a similar influence, for nowhere is the hand of skill unseen, or the arrangement of benevolence unfelt; but the objects which they present to us are still those of our own sublunary world. They are often too familiar to excite admiration,—too much under our power to excite respect,—too deeply impressed with our own mortality to enforce the lesson which they are so well fitted to suggest. The plains which we desolate, the institutions which we overturn, and the living beings which we trample upon or destroy, are not likely to be the instruments of our moral regeneration. Among scenes, indeed, where man is the tyrant, who can expect him to be the moralist or the philosopher.

How different is it with the bodies which the astronomer contemplates! For man they were not made, and to them his utmost power cannot reach. The world which he inhabits forms but the fraction of an unit in the vast scale upon which they are moulded. It disappears even in the range of distance at which they are placed. When seen from some of the nearest planets, it is but a dull speck in the firmament. Under this conviction, the astronomer must feel his own comparative insignificance; and amidst the sublimity and grandeur of the material universe, the proudest spirit must be abased, and filled for the reception of those nobler truths which can be impressed only on a humble and a softened heart. He, indeed, who has rightly interpreted—the hand-writing of God in the heavens must be well prepared to appreciate it in the record of his revealed will.

Though the study of astronomy thus possesses peculiar claims upon our attention, the history of the science,—of the steps by which it successively attained its present state of perfection is, in another point of view, of nearly equal interest. Commencing in the earliest ages, and carried on with but little interruption to our own day, it forms the most continuous history of the progress of human reason; it exhibits to us the finest picture of the mind struggling against its own prejudices and errors, and finally surmounting the physical and moral barrier which appeared to have set a limit to its efforts; and it displays to us in the most instructive form the labours and the triumphs of men who, by the universal suffrage of ages, have been regarded as the ornaments of their species and as the lights of the civilized world.

THE DEAD SEA.

From Carne's "Letters from the East."

Whoever has seen the Dead Sea, will ever after have its aspect impressed on his memory: it is, in truth, a gloomy and fearful spectacle. The precipices, in general, descend abruptly into the lake, and on account of their height it is seldom agitated by the winds. Its shores are not visited by any footsteps save that of the wild Arab, and he holds it in superstitious dread. On some parts of the rocks there is a thick sulphureous encrustation, which appears foreign to their substance; and in their steep descents there are several deep caverns, where the benighted Bedouin sometimes finds a home. No unpleasant effluvia are perceptible around it, and birds are seen occasionally flying across. For a considerable distance from the bank the water appeared very shallow: this, with the soft slime at the bottom, and the fatigue we had undergone, prevented our trying its buoyant properties by bathing. A few inches beneath the surface of the mud are found those black sulphureous stones, out of which crosses are made and sold to the pilgrims. The water has an abominable taste, in which that of salt predominates: and we observed encrustations of salt on the surface of some of the rocks.

The mountains of the Judean side are lower than those of the Arabian, and also of a lighter colour; the latter chain at its southern extremity is said to consist of dark granite, and is of various colours. The hills which branch from the western end are composed entirely of white chalk: bitumen abounds most on the opposite shore. There is no outlet to this lake, though the Jordan flows into it, as did formerly the Kedron, and the Arnon to the south. It is not known that there has ever been any visible increase or decrease of its waters. Some have supposed that it finds a subterraneous passage to the Mediterranean, or that there is a considerable suction in the plain which forms its western boundary. But this plain, confined by the opposing mountains, is partially cultivated, and pro-

duces trees, and a rude pasture used by the camels of the Bedouins; although in some parts sandy. It has never been navigated since the cities were engulfed; and it is strange that no traveller should have thought of launching a boat to explore it, the only way that promises any success. Mr. H. travelled completely round it, but the journey was a very tedious and expensive one, as it occupied several weeks, and he was obliged to take a strong guard. He made no discovery. The superior of St. Saba related, that the people of the country who had crossed it on camels, in the shallower parts near the southern extremity, had declared to him, they had seen the remains of walls and other parts of buildings beneath the water. This is an old tale, although the waters have the property of encrusting and preserving most substances. Some stunted shrubs and patches of grass, a mere mockery of verdure, were scattered on the withered soil near the rocks. The golden and treacherous apples will be sought for in vain, as well as fish in the lake, which have also been asserted to exist. Its length is probably about sixty miles, the general breadth eight: it might be six miles over where we stood. The sun had now risen above the eastern barrier of mountains, and shone full on the bosom of the lake, which had the appearance of a plain of burnished gold. But the sadness of the grave was on it, and around it, and the silence also. However vivid the feelings are on arriving on its shores, they subside after a time into langour and uneasiness, and you long, if it were possible, to see a tempest wake on its bosom to give sound and life to the scene. We had now passed some hours at the lake, much to the discontent of Ibrahim, who, pacing up and down the shore, and gazing at the caverns, and the summits of the cliffs, was incessantly talking of the probable approach of the Arabs, or their espying us from above. The passage over the wilderness of Ziph had given us a more complete and intimate view of the lake than the usual route to Jericho, which conducts only to its commencement at the embouchure of the Jordan. The narrow beach terminated about two hundred yards below, where the cliffs sank abruptly into the sea. We had now to walk to its extremity along the shores, and over the plain beyond to Jericho, in a sultry day; and we took a last look at this famous spot, to which earth perhaps can furnish no parallel. The precipices around Sinai are savage and shelterless, but not like these, which look as if the finger of an avenging God had passed over their blasted fronts and recesses, and the deep at their feet, and caused them to remain for ever as when they first covered the guilty cities.

Towards the extremity of the sea we passed amidst hills of white chalk, and then entered on a tract of soft sand. Ascending a sand hill that overlooked the plain, we saw Jericho, contrary to our hope, at a great distance; and the level tract we must pass to arrive at it, was exposed to a sultry sun, without a single tree to afford us a temporary shade. The simile of the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land," was never more forcibly felt. We pursued our way over the dry and withered plain; the junction of the Jordan with the lake being seen far on the right. It was extremely hot, and I had thoughtlessly thrown away all our fresh water, to fill the leathern vessel with that of the Dead Sea. The route afforded no kind of moisture; springs or streams it was vain to hope for; and my poor attendants threw all the blame on me, and cursed from their hearts the infamous water that precluded the possibility of quenching their thirst. Once or twice I tried to drink it, but its abominable flavour was much worse than the most parching thirst. The plain was often intersected by deep and narrow ravines, the passing of which added to our annoyance and fatigue.