

THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

WHAT is the Solar System? An answer to this question introduces us to a spectacle of the vastest dimensions, and of the most exquisite workmanship. Tho' great, awfully intricate, and beautiful, each inhabitant of our Globe is intimately interested in its mysterious machinery; and to procure some definite notions of it, becomes, in some degree, the duty of each individual.

By the Solar System, we understand, a central body, with several other bodies, influenced by it, revolving round it. A lighted candle, with a few flies performing circular flights about its flame, may, for a moment, represent such a System. The centre of the Solar System is a body, whose vastness defies the imagination; and the specks which spin around it are mighty spheres,— Worlds, and their attendant Moons. The great Globe which we inhabit—with all its mountains, continents, and oceans,—with the forests, hills, ships, and castles, which like small dust mark its surface,—large though it is, even to bewilderment—is but equal to one thousandth part of the bulk of the centre of the Solar System: Ten thousand masses, each equal to our earth, would scarcely make a body equal to the Sun! This stupendous body dispenses light and heat through a vast space; and philosophers suppose, that itself is an intensely bright, hot, mass. It is situated, in the boundless fields of space, so far from our Earth, that to us it appears not much larger than a cannon ball. Around this incomprehensibly vast and brilliant body, seven mighty spheres revolve, the paths which they travel in their revolutions being called their orbits. Some of those, mystically supported and impelled, spheres, have attendant orbs, which revolve around them as they do around the Sun; these are called Moons; the spheres which they attend are named Planets. All of them, Planets and Moons, are kept in their orbits, and their inconceivably rapid, compound, motions are supported, by some amazing powers; powers understood only by their Maker, and, perhaps, by the angels who witnessed their creation, and, we may hope, by the spirits of just men made perfect. Thus this stupendous machinery works, noiselessly, regularly, without signs of decay; a continued miracle on the grandest scale; a rapture-demanding production of him who clothes the lilies of the valley in beauty. Each of those vast planets is enlightened and warmed by the Sun, and reflects his rays. When seen thus illuminated, twinkling in the fields of ether, men call them stars, gems, lamps, forgetful of their vast sizes, and fearful motions; of the continued supervision which is necessary for their preservation; and of the ease by which he who made them could let them all run to destructive confusion, by merely withholding or withdrawing the secret influences which retain them in their places. The other small specks which mark, what we call, the heavens, are supposed to be other suns, and centres of other systems. The planets are distinguished by certain names. The planet nearest the sun (which proximity,

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