

ORIGINAL.

ON HEAVEN.

How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord
Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

ALTHOUGH it is impossible for us, so long as we remain here on earth, to form to ourselves any just or adequate idea of the kingdom of heaven ; for, however glorious we imagine it to be, it is still infinitely more so, than yet we have conceived it : nevertheless there are some considerations, which lead us on a far way in the contemplation of that place of bliss : which make us view, though from a distance, like Moses from the mountain, the promised land ; and shew us enough of that happy country of the children of God, to wean our affections from all sublunary enjoyments, and fix them on those of the life to come.

Of this sort is the consideration of this visible universe, and of the glorious prospect it exhibits to our view. For, in taking a general survey of this nether world, and in particular of that part of it, which we ourselves inhabit, we are naturally inclined to raise our thoughts to the happier world above, where we hope some day to be associated with the saints and angels in the enjoyment of our God for an endless eternity.

Look round you then, Christians, and contemplate the grandeur and beauty of the scene, which God has here displayed before you. Consider what he has done to render you happy even in this your mortal and imperfect state of existence ; and then think what he will do to compleat your happiness in that state of perfection and immortality, to which those shall be one day raised who love him here and keep his commandments.

Behold with the Psalmist *how the mountains ascend and the plains descend to the place which he has founded for them. How he sends forth the springs in the vallies, and between the hills the waters pass.* Ps. ciii. 8, 10. See the earth teeming with all her various productions, her trees and herbs, fruits and flowers. Her green fields and meadows, her woods and lawns, are stocked with numberless animals, destined not merely for our use, but also for our pleasure and amusement.—The sheep lend us their fleece, to defend us against the cold. The horse and ox tamely submit their necks to the yoke, assist us in our labour, and bear the burthen of our toil. The cattle send us their precious streams of milk, and daily furnish new dainties to our board. To omit thousands more, of the savage as well as domestic kind, equally useful and amusing to us. Are not our ears charmed with the melody of the birds, that soar aloft and wing their flight through the regions of the air.—The very insect tribes, or those that creep, or those that fly, deserve our regard. What an infinite variety of sizes, shapes and hues, do they not present to the eye of the curious observer ! And how pleasant to the ear is the ceaseless hum, which their winged nations raise, as they sport at large, and pursue their airy dance over all the surface of the earth ! Some even of these are busied in labour for us, and exert all their skill and industry in

the service of man. For man the silk-worm weaves her slender web ; and the bee extracts her honey from the flowers. Through what wonderful stages of existence do we not see many of them pass ! which from the condition of loathsome reptiles, rise into that of beautiful flies ; display their gilded plumage to the sun ; and, spurning their native dust, sally forth in quest of new and more extensive scenes of bliss ! Nor let us even disdain to trace in objects so mean, a lively figure of our own resurrection and future glory.

Neither is the watery element without its inhabitants, Millions of living creatures people the vast abyss, and wander through the trackless paths of the deep. Over these also has man received dominion. His hand can find them in their most secret recesses. He calls them up from their deepest gulfs, and leads them forth to the dry land.

The royal prophet, considering how richly God had furnished out our habitation here below, and how he had subjected all things to man ; at the same time reflecting on the meanness of the creature, for whom he had deigned to work such wonders ; breaks out into the following exclamation : *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man, that thou shouldst regard him ? Thou hast made him little less than the angels ; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and thou hast placed him over all the works of thy hands.—Thou hast put all things under his feet, the sheep, the oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes that wander through the paths of the deep. O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is thy name over all the earth !* Ps. viii.

But if from off this earth we raise our eyes to contemplate the heavens, what a new scene of wonder and admiration opens to our view ! At his appointed moment we behold the sun issuing forth upon our horizon ; and rolling from East to West his refulgent orb. The fleecy clouds, that sail along the blue expanse of the firmament, kindle at his approach, and form a delightful prospect to the enraptured eye. The birds and beasts are roused at his return. Every living creature feels his heat.—The very fishes at the bottom of their oozy caverns bestir themselves, and leap and sport beneath his gladdening beam. Nor is even the inanimate creation insensible of his presence. All nature feels his influence throughout her wide domain. Each herb, revived with his warming ray, lifts up its drooping head : each tree puts forth its leaves.—Amid the smiling scene see man himself walk forth, to partake of the general joy. His posture erect and majestic mien bespeak him the Lord of this lower world. He alone, fair Reason's child, is capable of discovering in the works of nature the finger of an almighty and all-wise Creator, and of rendering him that homage of praise and benediction, which is his due. He alone can explain with the psalmist. *How great are thy works, O Lord ! Thou hast made all things with wisdom. The earth is filled with thy riches. Bless then the Lord, O my soul ! O Lord, my God, thou art exceeding great.*

The sun has no sooner finished his daily career

and night has come again to refresh the earth with her falling dews ; than another scene, not indeed so gay and exhilarating, but more sublimely grand and solemn, immediately succeeds. In proportion as the bright orb of day recedes, the planets and stars begin to appear. Their number seems to increase by degrees, till the whole firmament is in a glow. To compleat the grandeur of the scene, the moon rises at last : and urging her way through the obstructing cloud, takes her progress along the sky, and diffuses her silver light over the face of our benighted world.

Such then, and so magnificent is the habitation which our God has fitted up for us here below.—*He hath given the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night : (Gen. i.)* and has commanded them to lead on the seasons in their turns. The whole pavement of heaven has he strewed with beaming sapphires, numberless as the sands on the sea shore. He has hung them up as high, like so many lamps ; and has suspended them over our heads, to light us during the night, and to shine forth upon us with undiminished lustre to the end of time.

But if this world, which God has created only for our temporary abode ; which itself is also subject to decay ; for according to Saint Peter, (2. Ep. iii. 10.) *the heavens shall pass away with great violence ; and the elements shall be melted with heat ; and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burned.* If this world the duration of which is so short, and the end and design so limited, be decked out in such magnificence ; what must be the splendour and magnificence of the world above, which God has designed for the place of our eternal abode with himself, where he will take a pleasure in manifesting to his chosen creatures all his beauty and all his grandeur !

Besides we must recollect that this world, however great and admirable, is but the woeful region of sickness and death ; is, but a vale of tears ; in which we are condemned for a while to suffer, weep and mourn : a place of probation, where we must be tried and found worthy, before we can be admitted into the eternal mansions of bliss above : a land deluged with iniquity, where the wicked are seen to mingle with the virtuous ; for *God makes his sun here to rise upon the good and bad, and commands it to rain upon the just and unjust.* Matt. viii. 45. Where even the number of his friends, for whose sake alone the world endures, is far exceeded by that of his enemies. We must remember, in fine, that this world is the barren desert, through which we now travel, like the Israelites of old : Heaven the promised land, to which we tend.

If then, notwithstanding all this, it has pleased God to rear such a mighty fabric, and to create so stupendous an universe ; what must that universe be, and how great and magnificent the fabric, which he has prepared for the habitation of his elect : where only the dear objects of his predilection shall reside ; from whose eyes, like a tender parent, he shall wipe away every tear : where death shall be no more, nor mourning nor crying : for these former things