

INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE.

THE HISTORY OF MANKIND.

INTRODUCTION.

If the history of one man, whose life has been diversified by adventures, be interesting to his fellow men, how much more interesting must be the history of the whole human race, viewed as the collective members of one family, the branches of which have extended thro' all the regions of the globe! By ancient records, by monuments that have been preserved through the revolutions of ages, and by numerous other kinds of evidence, we are enabled to look back through the midst of time to that remote period, when this world was in its infancy, and when man had only just gone forth, like a labourer at day-break to commence his arduous pilgrimage. At first we behold him, an isolated being, standing alone on the yet unpeopled earth; then we find him increase and multiply his species, build cities, invent arts, and disperse into different and far distant countries, where both his body and mind become assimilated to the most opposite extremes of climate. At every step of his progress, we observe his character modified or changed, by the effects of external circumstances operating upon the peculiar pliability of his nature. In one position, we find him degraded into the condition of a savage; he lives naked in the forests; his food consists only of the roots and herbs which grow wild in the fields; his time is past in the repose of sloth-like indolence; or his actions are wild, fierce, and brutal, prompted by the darkest and the most unhallowed passions that can rend the human heart. In another, we observe him surrounded by all the glowing luxuries of civilization; his person is swathed in gorgeous silks and golden tissues; his steps rest only on the softest carpets; his bed is swelled with luxuriant down; his table loaded with all the delicacies which the animal or vegetable creation can provide; he is attended by a retinue of his fellow-creatures, habited as beings of an inferior order, he has been born to fortune, and is, perhaps, the envied scion of royalty! But, instead of taking either of these extremes, let us look into the origin and history of nations; let us view man as he existed in ages far remote, and as he still exists in all regions of the world. Surely it will afford us no ordinary interest and pleasure thus to trace the stream of our existence, through all its deviations, down from its fountain head. If we could read the history of our own race aright, how much would it contribute to our own happiness! for every condition in which man may be found must suggest its own moral. Here do we see how energy, activity and industry have delivered him from the miseries of savage life, and surrounded him by all the comforts that are required to redress his wants and satisfy his desires: there do we observe how misgovernment may enshroud the most civilized society with slavery, and how luxury may undermine the stability of the proudest empire. In the one instance, we read the lesson which should urge us to subdue and govern our own individual passions; in the other, we observe the elucidation of those political principles which can alone link nation to nation in the bonds of peace and friendship.

ORIGIN OF MAN.

That man did not exist from all eternity, but was created, is obvious; for we see that nations increase according to a certain rate of progression; so that the further we recede in our calculations, the more we must reduce the existing number of inhabitants, until we reach a period when only a single family could have existed. But this is not all: a more conclusive proof remains, which is, as it were, lettered

in the structure of the globe itself. We find that this earth is constructed of numerous rocks and soils, laid in regular succession, one above the other—the lowest being the most simple, and the oldest; the highest the most complete, and the most recent. We observe, in like manner, that there are various gradations of living beings—plants constituting the lowest, man the highest link in the chain; between which extremes, we find fishes, reptiles, birds, and quadrupeds. Now, when the structure of the globe is examined, it appears to have undergone prodigious revolutions, all of which have been more or less destructive to the beings then in existence. We first find rocks, wherein no remains of plants or animals are found. We next find another series, where the remains of plants and the simplest kind of animals abound; then we excavate the bones of reptiles, birds, and numerous quadrupeds, each in successive strata; yet the remains of man we do not discover. At the present time, caves are continually opened, which appear to have been the abodes of wild and savage beasts, proving that when they prowled abroad, mankind were too few in number to subdue them. Animals multiply quicker (generally speaking) than the human species, and before the flood, which imbedded their remains, they wandered far into the woods extending their dominion over the greater part of the uninhabited world, while the human race, few in number, was confined to a single region. Since, then, amidst the vestiges of those great revolutions which have occurred in the globe itself, we do not find the bones of man, but only the remains of inferior animals, it is evident that only few of the human species could have existed when these catastrophes took place; therefore, the multiplication of mankind must be, (comparatively speaking) very recent; but let not this be misunderstood, for all we mean by recent, is, that, in the sight of eternity, three or four thousand years are but as a day, or as a wave in the bosom of a passing stream.

Accordingly, there was a time when man first began to exist. that he did not create himself, is obvious; therefore he must have been created. The tales of the gravest philosophers on this subject rival in extravagance the most ludicrous nursery stories that ever beguiled the ear of childhood. But it is unnecessary to enter into these absurdities; it only remains for us to ask ourselves—by what kind of evidence are we to explain the origin of man?

When we examine the human body, we find it composed of many parts, all of which harmonize together for the production of a certain system, exactly as the stars we see in heaven, by their mutual relations, compose the system of the universe. But no examination of the human body can elucidate its origin. The anatomist may unravel its most intricate machinery, and lay bare, with his dissecting-knife, the course of the minutest nerves—the physiologist may explain how the structure of the eye may be adapted to the sense of sight, and how every organ has a structure appropriate to its particular use—the chemist, when death has sealed down the eyelids, and the vital spirit has departed, may, in his turn, analyze and explain the principles which composed the decaying frame—but not all their combined sagacity can approach even to the remotest explanation of how these elements could so arrange themselves as to produce an organization so complete and so perfect, that its contemplation alone cannot fail to humble the pride of the most daring philosophy. Since, then, no effort of ingenuity can solve this mystery, nor any examination of the body itself afford us the slightest assistance, there is only one other kind of evidence to which

we can have recourse—it is the evidence of History.

The most ancient history in existence was discovered about the fifteenth or sixteenth century before the birth of Christ, and is thus described by Sir William Jones, whose knowledge of eastern language, & extensive erudition, are of the highest character:—"The oldest composition," says he "perhaps in the world, is a work in the Hebrew, which we may suppose at first, for the sake of argument to have no higher authority than any other work of equal antiquity that the researches of the curious had accidentally brought to light; it is ascribed to *MUSAN*, for so he writes his own name, which, after the Greeks and Romans, we have changed into *Moses*. After describing, with awful solemnity, the creation of the universe, he asserts that one pair of every animal species, was called from nothing into existence; that the human pair were strong enough to be happy, but free to be miserable; that, from delusion and temerity, they disobeyed the Supreme Benefactor, whose goodness could not pardon them, consistently with his justice; and that they received a punishment adequate to their disobedience, but softened by a mysterious promise, to be accomplished in their descendants."

Trusting, then to this historical testimony—which can only guide us through this and other perplexing mysteries—we must come to the conclusion that man was formed by a Creator; and although it is not necessary for us to advance any further proofs in support of this belief, we may observe, that, notwithstanding this account is handed down by tradition, yet the events which took place before the deluge have been transmitted to us almost as directly as any of those which took place after that epoch. This was occasioned by the very great longevity of the patriarchs. Noah lived some hundred years with thousands of persons who had conversed with Adam; and Abraham lived with Shem, the son of Noah; so that from the time of Adam to that of Abraham was comparatively no greater a length, even for tradition, than from our father's grandfather to ourselves.

The birth-place of man—or that region of the world in which he was created—has attracted much notice; and, independently of all higher authority, natural historians have come to the conclusion that both men and animals originally migrated from Asia. The illustrious naturalist Linnæus says, "that the bill of creation" exists in nature not only as a single acclivity, but as an extensive amphitheatre—a constellation of mountains, the arms of which stretch out into various climates. In the early history of the world, while other parts of the earth were covered with water, or presented only a dreary surface of bogs and morasses, the high land of Asia was already crowned with forests, and abounded with multitudes of animals, which have since dispersed themselves into every latitude of the globe. Here roamed in freedom the wild ox or buffalo, the musimon (whence is derived our common sheep); the camel, the wild cat (from which our domestic cat is sprung), the jackall, which (by intermixture with the wolf, and even, as some suppose, with the hyena) originated our domestic dog; the rein-deer, the sagacious elephant, the cunning ape. Here, too, the grape, olive, pomegranate, orange, and all the most luxuriant fruits, grew wild. In many places even the corn grew spontaneously. In this delightful region was man created; here did our first parents enjoy the brief sunshine of primeval innocence; here all was happiness, until their disobedience to Heaven's high decree "brought death into the world, and all our woe;" then were they