

BIOGRAPHY.

MILTON.

Milton stood apart from all earthly things. He may be likened to that interpreter of the mysterious things of Providence, who sits in the bright circle of the sun; while Shakspeare resembles rather the spirit created by his own matchless imagination, which wanders over earth and sea, with power to subdue all minds and hearts by the influence of his magic spell. The poetry of Milton is accordingly solemn and dignified, as well becomes the moral sublimity of his character, and the sacredness of his awful theme. His mind appears to have been elevated by the glories revealed to his holy contemplation; and his inspiration is as much loftier than that of other poets, as his subject was superior to theirs. It is superfluous to say, that his moral influence is always conversant with divine things, and filled with the sublimest thoughts. Yet it has been sometimes said, that the qualities with which he has endued that most wonderful of all poetical creations, the leader of the fallen angels, are too fearfully sublime to be regarded with the horror and aversion which they ought naturally to inspire. He is indeed invested with many sublime attributes;—the fierce energy, unbroken by despair—the unconquerable will, which not even the thunders of the Almighty can bend;—but these qualities, though they may fill us with wonder and awe, are not attractive. His tenderness is only the bitterness of remorse, without end and hopelessness; his self devotion is only the result of wild ambition; and a dreadful retribution at length falls upon him, ‘according to his doom.’ In this exhibition of character, there is undoubtedly vast intellectual power, but there is nothing redeeming, nothing which can win the soul to love. We dread the effect of those delineations in which crime, from which nature recoils, is allied to qualities, with which we involuntarily sympathise; such portraits are of evil tendency, because, though unnatural, they are still attractive; but great crime frequently supposes the existence of imposing traits of character, which may excite admiration, without engaging sympathy. We are interested in Conrad, because his fierce and gloomy spirit is mastered by the passion which masters all—because in him it is deep and overwhelming, yet refined and pure like the token, which restored the

reprinting Peri to Eden—the redeeming and expiatory virtue, which shows that the light of the soul, however darkened, is not extinguished altogether—and we do not ask, how purity and love can find their refuge in a pirate’s bosom—we do not remember, that they could as hardly dwell there as Abdiel among the rebel host. Not so the ruined Archangel. In him all may be grand and imposing, but all is dark, stern and relentless. If there be ought to admire, there is at least nothing to imitate. Through all the writings of Milton, there reign a loftiness and grandeur which seem to raise the soul to the standard of his own elevation. The finest minds have resorted to them for the rich treasures of eloquence and wisdom; and they might also find in them the more enduring treasures of virtue and piety.

ASTRONOMY.

ASTRONOMICAL CALCULATION.

Many persons who have not had the advantages of proper instruction in mathematical science, cannot be persuaded that it is in the power of man to ascertain the distance of the sun, moon, and planets, and, of course, pay little regard to the assertions of astronomers on this subject. Sometimes, they are bold enough to say the thing is impossible, because no one has ever been to any of those bodies. Let such persons consider, that it is not necessary to go to its remote object in order to measure its distance; for that purpose, it will be sufficient to know the length of a line at the place of the spectator, and the inclination of this line to two others directed from its extremities to the object; for, on the length of this line, and the position of the two others, depends the distance of the object from the ends of that line.

Thus if I wish to know the distance of a neighbouring tower, or other object beyond a river, or in some other way inaccessible; I measure any convenient line terminating at my station, and by some instrument proper for measuring angles, I ascertain the position of my measured line to the lines connecting its extreme points and the object. On these data depend the distance, and from this distance and these angles accurately measured, the exact distance may be with great ease truly found. It is on similar principles that astron-