

THE WORLD.

Nihil est dulcius his terrens quibus ca hinc terram. narn. cognoscimus.

There is a noble passage in Lucretius, in which he describes a savage in the early stages of the world, when men were yet contending with beasts the possession of the earth, flying with loud shrieks through the woods from the pursuit of some ravenous animals, unable to fabricate arms for his defence, and without art to staunch the streaming wounds inflicted on him by his four-footed competitor. But there is a deeper subject of speculation, if we carry our thoughts back to that still earlier period when the beasts of the field and forests held undivided sway; when Titanian brutes, whose race has been long extinct, exercised a terrific despotism over the subject earth; and that "bare forked animal," who is pleased to dub himself the Lord of the Creation, had not been called up out of the dust to assume his *soi-dissant* supremacy. Philosophers and geologists discover in the bowels of the earth itself indisputable proofs that it must have been for many centuries nothing more than a splendid arena for monsters. We have scarcely penetrated beyond its surface; but, whenever any convulsion of nature affords us a little deeper insight into her recesses, we seldom fail to discover fossil remains of gigantic creatures, though, amid all these organic fragments, we never encounter the slightest trace of any human relics. How strange the thought, that for numerous, perhaps innumerable centuries, this most beautiful pageant of the world performed its magnificent evolutions, the sun and moon rising and setting, the seasons following their appointed succession, and the ocean uprolling its invariable tides, for no other apparent purpose than that lions and tigers might retire howling to their dens as the shaking of the ground proclaimed the approach of the mammoth, or that the behemoth might perform his unwieldy flounders in the deep! How bewildering the idea that the glorious firmament and its constellated lights, and the varicolored clouds that hang like pictures upon its sides, and the perfume which the flowers scatter from their painted censers, and the blushing fruits that delight the eye not less than the palate and the perpetual music of winds, waves and woods, should have been formed for the recreation and embellishment of a vast menagerie!

And yet we shall be less struck with wonder that all this beauty, pomp, and delight, should have been thrown away upon undiscerning and unreasonable brutes, if we call to mind that many of those human bipeds, to whom nature has given the "os sublime," have little more perception or enjoyment of her charms than a "cow on a common, or a goose on a green." Blind to her more obvious wonders, we cannot expect that they should be interested in the silent but stupendous miracles which an invisible hand is perpetually performing around them—that they should ponder on the mysterious, and even contradictory metamorphoses which the unchanged though change-producing earth is unceasingly effecting. She converts an acorn into a majestic oak, and they heed it not, though they will wonder for whole months how harlequin changed a porter-pot into a nosegay;—she raises from a little bulb a stately tulip, and they only notice it to remark, that it would bring a good round sum in Holland;—from one seed she elaborates an exquisite flower, which diffuses a delicious perfume, while to another by its side she imparts an offensive odour; from some she extracts a poison, from others a balm, while from the reproductive powers of a small grain she contrives to feed the whole populous earth; and yet these matter-of-course gentry, because such magical paradoxes are habitual, see in them nothing more strange than that they themselves should cease to be hungry when they have had their dinners, or that two and two should make four, when they are adding up their Christmas bills. It is of no use to remind such obtuse plodders, when recording individual enthusiasm, that

My charmer is not mine alone, my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitter tows,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form
And elements divine I trace a hand
That ere not, and find raptures still renew'd,
Is free to all men—universal prize!"

for though she may be free to them, she sometimes prescribes them, instead of a prize, "an universal blank." The most astounding manifestations, if they recur regularly, are unmarked; it is only the trifling deviations from their own daily experience that set them gaping in a stupid astonishment.

For my own part, I thank Heaven that I can never step out into this glorious world, I can never look forth upon the flowery earth, and the glancing waters, and the blue sky, without feeling an intense and ever new delight; a physical pleasure that makes mere existence delicious. Apprehensions of the rheumatism may deter me from imitating the noble fervour of Lord Bacon, who, in a shower, used sometimes to take off his hat, that he might feel the great spirit of the universe descend upon him; but I had rather gulp down the balmy air than quaff the richest ambrosia that was ever tipped upon Olympus; for while it warms and expands the heart, it produces no other intoxication than that intellectual abandonment which gives up the whole soul to a mingled overflowing of gratitude to Heaven, and benevolence towards man. "Were I not Alexander," said the Emathian madman, "I would wish to be Diogenes;" so, when feasting upon this aerial beverage, which is like swallowing so much vitality, I have been tempted to ejaculate: "Were I not a man, I should wish to be a chameleon." In Pudding Lane, and the Minorities, I am aware that this potation, like Irish whiskey, is apt to have the smack of the smoke somewhat too strong; and even the classic atmosphere of Conduit-street may occasionally require a little filtering; but I speak of that pure, racy, elastic element which I have this morning been inhaling in one of the forests of France, where, beneath a sky of inconceivable loveliness, I reclined upon a mossy bank, moralizing like Jacques; when, as if to complete the scene, a stag emerged from the trees, gazed at me for a moment, and dashed across an opening into the far country. Here was an end of every thing Shakspearian, for presently the sound of horns made the welkin ring, and a set of grotesque figures bedizened with lace dresses, cocked hats, and jack-boots, deployed from the wood, and followed the chase with praiseworthy regularity, the nobles taking the lead, and the procession being brought up by the *valets des chiens a pied*. Solitude and silence again succeeded to this temporary interruption, though in the amazing clearness of the atmosphere I could see the stag and his pursuers scouring across the distant plain, like a pigmy pageant, long after I had lost the sound of the horns and the baying of the dogs. A man must have been abroad to form an idea of this lucidness and transparency, which confers upon him a new sense, or at least enlarges an old one by the additional tracts of country which it places within his visual grasp, and the heightened hues with which the wide horizon is invested by the crystal medium through which it is surveyed. I feel this extension of power with a more emphatic complacency, because it seems to impart a warmer zest to religious impressions; though I suspect novelty contributes liberally to the result, as I do not by any means find a correspondent fervour in those who have passed their lives in this delightful climate.

In the unfavored regions, where Heaven seems to look with a scowling eye upon the earth, and the hand of a tremendous Deity is perpetually stretched forth to wield the thunder and the storm, men not only learn to reverence the power on whose mercy they feel themselves to be hourly dependent, but instinctively turn from the hardships and privations of this world to the hope of more genial skies and luxurious sensations in the next. The warmth of religion is frequently in proportion to the external cold; the more the body shivers, the more the mind wraps itself up in ideal furs, and revels in imaginary sunshine; and it is remarkable, that in every creed, climate forms an essential feature in the rewards or punishments of a future state. Scandinavian hell was placed amid "chilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;" while the attractions of the Mahometan Paradise is the coolness of its shady groves. By the lot of humanity, there is no proportion between the extremes of pleasure and

pain. No enjoyment can be set off against an acute tooth-ache, much less against the amputation of a limb, or many permanent diseases; and our distributions of a future state strikingly attest this inherent inequality. The torments are intelligible and distinct enough, and lack not a tangible conception; but the beauties are shadowy and indefinite, and, for want of some experimental standard by which to estimate them, are little better than abstractions.

In the temperate and delicious climates of the earth, which ought to operate as perpetual stimulants to gratify piety, there is, I apprehend, too much enjoyment to leave room for any great portion of religious fervour. The inhabitants are too well satisfied with this world to look much beyond it. "I have no objection," said an English sailor, "to pray upon the occasion of a storm or a battle, but they make us say prayers on board our ship when it is the finest weather possible, and not an enemy's flag to be seen!" This is but a blind aggravation of a prevalent feeling among mankind, when the very blessings we enjoy, by attaching us to earth, render us almost indifferent to heaven. When they were comforting a King of France upon his death-bed with assurances of a perennial throne amid the regions of the blessed, he replied with a melancholy air, that he was perfectly satisfied with the Tuilleries and France. I myself began to feel the enervating effects of climate, for there has not been a single morning, in this country, in which I could have submitted, with a reasonable good humour, to be hanged; while in England, I have experienced many days, in and out of November, when I could have gone through the operation with stoical indifference; nay, have even felt an extraordinary respect for the Ordinary, and have requested Mr. Ketch to "accept the assurances of my distinguished consideration" for taking the trouble off my own hands. I am capable of feeling now why the Neapolitans, in the late invasion, boggled about exchanging, upon a mere point of honor, their sunny skies, "love-breathing woods and lute-resounding waves," and the sight of the dancing Mediterranean, for the silence and darkness of the cold blind tomb. Falstaffs in every thing, they "like not such grinning honor as Sir Walter hath." From the same cause, the luxurious Asiatics have always fallen an easy prey to the invader; while the Arab has invariably been ready to fight for his burning sands, and the Scythian for his snows, not because they overvalued their country, but because its hardships had made them undervalue life. As many men cling to existence to perpetuate pleasures, so there are some who will even court death to procure them. Gibbon records what he terms the enthusiasm of a young Mussulman, who threw himself upon the enemy's lances, singing religious hymns, proclaiming that he saw the black-eyed Houris of Paradise waiting with open arms to embrace him, and cheerfully sought destruction that he might revel in lasciviousness. This is not the fine courage of principle, nor the fervor of patriotism, but the drunkenness of sensuality. The cunning device of Mahomet, in offering a posthumous bonus to those who would have their throats cut for the furtherance of his ambition, was but an imitation of Odin and other northern butchers; and what is glory in its vulgar acceptance, stars, crosses, ribbons, titles, public funerals, and national monuments, but the blinding baubles with which more legitimate slaughterers lure on dupes and victims to their own destruction? These sceptered jugglers shall never coax a bayonet into my body, nor wheedle a bullet into my brain; for I had rather go without rest altogether, than sleep in the bed of honor. So far from understanding the ambition of being turned to dust, I hold with the old adage about the living dog and dead lion. I am pigeon livered, and lack gall to encounter the stern scythe-bearing skeleton. When I return to the land of fogs I may get courage to look him in the skull; but it unnerves one to think of quitting such delicious skies, and rustling copses, and thick-flowered meads, and Favonian gales as these which now surround me; and it is intolerable to reflect, that yonder blazing sun may shine upon my grave without imparting to me any

portion of this cheerful warmth, or that the blackbird, whom I now hear warbling as if his heart were running over with joy, may perch upon my tombstone without my hearing a single note of his song.

As it is probable that the world existed many ages without any inhabitants whatever, was, next subjected to the empire of brutes, and now constitutes the dominion of man, it would seem likely, that in its progressive advancement to higher destinies it may ultimately have lords of the creation much superior to ourselves, who may speak compassionately of the degradation it experienced under human possession, and congratulate themselves on the extinction of that pugnacious and mischievous biped called Man. The face of Nature is still young; it exhibits neither wrinkles nor decay, whether radiant with smiles or awfully beautiful in frowns, it is still enchanting, and not less fraught with spiritual than material attractions, if we do but know how to moralize upon her features and presentments. To consider, for instance, this balmy air which is gently waving the branches of a chestnut tree before my eyes—what a mysterious element it is! Powerful enough to shipwreck navies, and tear up the deep grappling oak, yet so subtle as to be invisible, and so delicate as not to wound the naked eye. Naturally imperishable, who can imagine all the various purposes to which the identical portion may have been applied, which I am at this instant inhaling? Perhaps at the creation it served to modulate in words the sublime command, "Let there be light," when the blazing sun rolled itself together, and upheaved from chaos:—perhaps impelled by the jealous Zephyrus it urged Apollo's quoit against the blue-veined forehead of Hyacinthos;—it may perchance have filled the silken sails of Cleopatra's vessel, as she floated drownd the Cydnus; or have burst from the mouth of Cicero in the indignant exordium—"Quousque tandem. Catilina, abutere patientia nostra?" or his still more abrupt exclamation, "Absit—evasit—excessit—crupit!" It may have given breath to utter the noble dying speeches of Socrates in his prison, of Sir Philip Sidney on the plains of Zutphen, of Russell at the block. But the same inexhaustible element which would supply endless matter for my reflections, may perhaps pass into the mouth of the reader, and be vented in a peevish—"Psha! somewhat too much of this,"—and I shall therefore hasten to take my leave of him, claiming some share of credit, that when so ample a range was before me, my speculations should so soon, like the witches in Macbeth, have "made themselves air, into which they vanished."

Fun, Facts, and Fancies.

To all men the best friend is virtue; the best companions are high endeavors and honorable sentiments.

Of all monarchs, nature is the most just in the enactment of laws, and the most rigorous in the violation of them.

We are often more cruelly robbed by those who steal into our hearts than by those who break into our houses.

In some tranquil and apparently amiable natures there are often unsuspected and unfathomable depths of resentment.

That only can with propriety be styled refinement, which by strengthening the intellect, purifies the manners.

When a young man complains bitterly that a young lady has no heart, it is a pretty certain sign that she at least has his.

He who thinks he can do without others is mistaken; he who thinks others can do without him, is still more mistaken.

When a cunning man seems the most humble and submissive, he is often the most dangerous. Look out for the crouching tiger.

Friends should be very delicate and careful in administering pity as medicine, when enemies use the same article as poison.

Some of us fret inwardly, and some fret outwardly. The latter is the better plan for our friends, but the worse for ourselves.