

WORDS OF THE WISE.

BISHOP HALL'S OCCASIONAL MEDITATIONS.

ON THE SIGHT OF A DIAL.

If the sun did not shine upon this dial, nobody would look at it. In a cloudy day it stands like a useless post, unheeded, unregarded; but when once those beams break forth, every passenger runs to it, and gazes on it.

O God, while thou hidest Thy countenance from me, methinks all Thy creatures pass by me with a willing neglect. Indeed, what am I without Thee? And if Thou have drawn in me some lines and notes of able endowments, yet if I be not actuated by Thy grace, all is, in respect of use, no better than nothing; but when Thou renewest the light of Thy loving countenance upon me, I find a sensible and happy change of condition; methinks all things look upon me with such cheer and observance, as if they meant to make good that word of thine, "Those that honour me, I will honour." Now every line and figure which it hath pleased Thee to work in me serve for useful and profitable direction. O Lord, all the glory is Thine. Give Thou me light; I shall give others information; both of us shall give Thee praise.

ON A FAIR PROSPECT.

What a pleasing variety is here of towns, rivers, hills, dales, woods, meadows, each of them striving to set forth the other, and all of them to delight the eye! So as this is no other than a natural and real landscape, drawn by that almighty and skilful hand, in this table of the earth, for the pleasure of our view. No other creature besides man is capable to apprehend this beauty. I shall do wrong to him that brought me hither if I do not feed my eyes, and praise my Maker. It is the intermixture and change of these objects that yields this contentment both to the sense and mind.

But there is a sight, oh, my soul, that, without all variety, offers thee a truer and fuller delight—even this heaven above thee. All thy other prospects end in this. This glorious circumference bounds, and circles, and enlightens all that thine eye can see: whether thou look upward, or forward, or about thee, there thine eye alights; there let thy thoughts be fixed. One inch of this lightsome firmament hath more beauty in it than the whole face of the earth; and yet this is but the floor of that goodly fabric, the outward curtain of that glorious tabernacle. Couldst thou but (Oh, that thou couldst!) look within that veil, how shouldst thou be ravished with that blissful sight! There, in that incomprehensible light, thou shouldst see Him whom none can see and not be blessed; thou shouldst see millions of pure and majestic angels, of holy and glorified souls; there, amongst thy Father's many mansions, thou shouldst take happy notice of thine own. Oh, the best of earth, how vile and contemptible! Come down no more, oh, my soul, after thou hast once pitched upon this heavenly glory; or, if this flesh force thy descent, be unquiet till thou art let loose to immortality.

ON OCCASION OF A RED-BREAST COMING INTO HIS CHAMBER, AND SINGING.

Pretty bird, how cheerfully dost thou sit and sing, and yet knowest not where thou art, nor where thou shalt make thy next meal, and at night must shroud thyself in a bush for lodging! What a shame is it for me, that see before me so liberal provisions of my God, and find myself set warm under my own roof, yet am ready to droop under a distrustful and unthankful dullness! Had I so little certainty of my harbour and purveyance, how heartless should I be, how careful! how little list should I have to make music to thee or myself! Surely thou camest not hither without a providence. God sent thee, not so much to delight, as to shame me; but all in a conviction of my sullen unbelief, who, un-