

pired me with veneration. He appeared to be a guide to the other, and, with a heavenly voice, thus addressed him: 'Inhabitant of Herschel\*, the time of your probation is finished. You have fulfilled the part allotted to you on the planet that gave you birth. The remembrance of your fidelity is the commencement of your happiness. Henceforth you will enjoy all the rewards assigned to virtue. The works of Nature, for ten successive ages, were the object of your study; but, in so short a period, it was impossible to explore all her wonders. Now you will behold new scenes in the grand theatre of the creation. Go from world to world; traverse the vast empire of Nature; in every part you will behold the goodness of its Author.— Endeavour to know him better, and you will not fail to love him more.'—'Celestial being,' said the inhabitant of Herschel, 'deign to be my guide.'—'Behold that planet which forms the third circle round the sun. The rational beings that inhabit it are called *men*; and they have named their planet *the earth*. Already have I endued you with the power of understanding their language; you will be invisible among them; study their nature, their destination, and their manners.'—Here I suddenly awoke, and regretted the illusion of sleep. I revolved in my mind, however, some of the scenes which must strike a spectator of the human race, exempt from our passions, errors, and weakness; and I considered also the various emotions of joy, surprise, or indignation, which he would feel in the contemplation of such different scenes. Full of these ideas, I dropped asleep again, and once more thought I saw the inhabitant of Herschel.—'What a world is this!' exclaimed he to his guide: 'what a strange assemblage of wisdom and folly, of truth and error, of grandeur and meanness among these men, who are blessed with such inestimable gifts, and almost constantly abuse them! Here Virtue mourns, Innocence is oppressed, Guilt triumphant; and these *men*, these disinherited brethren, incessantly forget alike their Common Parent, their duties, and their destination. I have seen the powerful crush the weak: I have seen Poverty expire with hunger at the gate of insatiated Opulence, whom Riot and Excess were conducting to the tomb. Why this unequal distribution among beings who have the same origin, the same wants, and

the same rights?'—'Their life,' answered the angel, 'is short, and their souls are immortal. Besides, in considering the lot of mankind, you must be careful not to judge from mere appearances. To ascertain whether they are happy or miserable, you must examine their hearts. *Virtue mourns*, you say; but Hope supports her, and Pity mitigates her sufferings.'—'Great God!' said a wise man among them, 'I implore thee only for the wicked: I pray not for the good: Thou hast done enough for them in making them good.'

'Is Guilt triumphant?' continued the angel: 'It is the short and illusive triumph of folly. Happiness ever flies from the guilty man; and Remorse, which incessantly pursues him, destroys the enjoyments to which he had madly sacrificed his virtue.'—'Alas!' interrupted the inhabitant of Herschel, 'are these insatuated mortals ignorant then, that every day of their lives is a step toward eternity? Why is not this *consolatory* yet *terrible* word ever present in their thoughts? Why—'—'Forgive my presumption, celestial being; why did not the Beneficent Creator reveal the mysteries of futurity more clearly to them? A more perfect idea of everlasting felicity would make a deeper impression on their hearts, and would deprive every temptation of his seductive power.'

'This life,' answered the angel, 'was intended for man as a state of trial and improvement. His preparation for a better world required a gradual purification, carried on by steps of progressive discipline. The situation, therefore, assigned him here, was such as to answer this design, by calling forth all his active powers, by giving full scope to all his moral dispositions, and bringing to light his whole character. Hence it became proper, that difficulty and temptation should arise in the course of his duty. Ample rewards were promised to virtue; but these rewards were left, as yet, in obscurity and distant prospect. The impressions of sense were so balanced against the discoveries of immortality, as to allow a conflict between faith and sense, between conscience and desire, between present pleasure and future good. In this conflict, the souls of good men are tried, improved, and strengthened. In this field, their honours are reaped. Here are formed the capital virtues of fortitude, temperance, and self-denial; moderation in prosperity, moderation in adversity,

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submission

\* The name unanimously given, by the foreign astronomers, to a primary planet of our solar system, first discovered by Dr. Herschel, March 13, 1781, and by him named the *Georgium Sidus*.