

man to desire above all things a long life : and, at the same time, to sigh so much to have it shortened ! The fact is, we never think on the serious loss we sustain in letting slip unimproved the present, which can never be recalled ; but on the acquisition we may make by possessing the future, & the unknown gifts it may bring us. Still that future, which we so anxiously expect, if ever it should happen to be ours, will only become that present, which we shall again long to get rid of. In this manner do we throw away, as unworthy of our notice, a real, and covet only an imaginary good ; which never is, but is always about to be : is never real, but merely ideal and conjectural. The future indeed, is less real than the past : which though no longer existing, yet withal has been ; and has left its good or bad effects behind it. The past therefore is more connected with the present, than the future. The experience of the past teaches us how to improve the present ; and thus to provide against that future, which is as yet wholly unknown to us.

That part of our life, which really exists, is nothing but a swift passing moment ; which no sooner arrives, than it is gone for ever, and is swallowed up in the gulf of eternity, from which it sprung. No power on earth can arrest its progress, or make it tarry in its course. Our whole life consists but of a certain definite number of these moments, which God has determined, and which is known to him alone. As many of these moments as we mispend, so much of our life is irrevocably lost. A deduction is made from the talent allowed us, the interest of which is our provision for eternity ; though the whole capital amount is quite unknown to us ; so that the last mite to be spent, may be our only remaining one.

This neglect of the present and impatience to arrive at the future, shews, however, that there is nothing here below capable of contenting us.—After tasting successively of every enjoyment, we find the last is not yet the one we looked for ; the one that satisfies ; that so fills the heart, as to leave no room in it for further craving. Experience has shewn, and reason and religion are constantly warning us, that it is folly to think such bliss is to be found in any temporal enjoyment whatever.—Solomon, who withheld not his heart from indulging itself to the utmost in all the delights which riches, wordly grandeur, and even learning, could afford, confesses in the end that in all this he found nothing but vanity and vexation of mind. Eccles. v. 2.

No ! that hope, which constantly carries us away from what we actually have, to what may be yet acquired, proves that something still awaits us, if we but take the proper way to arrive at it, which will supersede all further wishes : some permanent and perfect bliss, out of which the soul of man (that noble and aspiring creature, whom any thing mean, vain and transitory can never content) shall have nothing to regret in the past, nor to desire in the future.

ON THE PROBABLE TIME OF THE WORLD'S ENDING.

Unum vero hoc non lateat vos, Charissimi, quia unus dies apud Dominum sicut millo anni : et mille anni sicut dies unus.—2 Pet. iii. 8.

Most dearly beloved ! be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years ; and a thousand years as one day.

In the text just cited the apostle St. Peter seems to allude to the words of the royal prophet : “ mille anni ante oculos tuos tranquam dies hesternus, quæ præterit.”—Ps. lxxxix. 4. *A thousand years in thine eyes are as yesterday, which is past and gone.*

From the occasion on which the apostle inculcates our remembrance of this prophetic saying ; and the earnestness with which he recommends it to our consideration ; it is pretty evident that it implies some important mystery, deserving our most diligent and attentive investigation. It has, indeed, been considered in this light by many in the Church from the earliest ages ; whose conjectures as to its predictive meaning I here endeavor to expose.

It is particularly to be observed that St. Peter urges it in direct contradiction to the infidel sophisms of immoral and profligate scoffers ; who, he says, are to make their appearance in the latter times, denying the promise and the coming of the Lord, and maintaining that all things hold, as they imagine they have ever done, their uniform natural course : not aware, he adds, because not choosing to be so, *latet enim eos hoc volentes*, that, (as the scriptures, and the Church of God inform them) the heavens and the earth were created by the word of God ; deranged by the deluge ; replaced again by the same divine word, and reserved for fire against the day of judgment, and the perdition of the ungodly, &c.

Who, on reading the whole context, would not imagine that the apostle was describing the very infidels of the present times, our modern freethinkers and their disciples : the ground-work of whose impious doctrine is that part which he here points out ; namely, the denial of the promise and coming of the Lord ; and the beginning and end of the world !

Every one acquainted with the deistical writings of these later times, down from Tyndal's anti-christian lucubrations, to the blasphemous effusions in prose and verse of our Rousseaus, Voltaires, and their demoralizing disciples and associates, knows how much these scribbling wits, these sophistical and deceitful scoffers, in *deceptione illusores*, as the apostle styles them, have endeavoured to persuade mankind that the account given by Moses of the creation is improbable, false, impossible : (offering, as better conceived, numberless absurd systems of their own invention) that the world is eternal, or that its formation was merely the effect of chance ; that all goes on in the usual way, without the interference of a providence : that were there such a being as a God, it were unworthy of him to concern himself with any thing that regards us : that the promises and threats of Jesus Christ are vain : that the last consuming fire, the end of the world, the

resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, heaven and hell, in a word, all revealed truths, are mere human fiction ; old wives fables ; childish bugbears, and religious chimeras.

The apostle's words on this head are truly remarkable. *That you may be mindful, he says, of those words, which I have mentioned to you before, spoken by the holy prophets ; and of the precepts of our Lord and Saviour, inculcated by your apostles ; knowing this first, that there shall come in the latter days scoffers in deceitfulness, walking according to their own concupiscences ; saying, where is his promise or his coming ? for, ever since our fathers have slept, all things go on in the same way as from the beginning. For they know not, because not choosing to know, that the heavens were first and the earth from water, and through water consisting by the word of God : so that the world, which then was, perished by the inundation of water ; but the heavens, which now are, and the earth, were replaced by the same word, and are reserved for fire against the day of judgment, and the perdition of the ungodly, &c.*

Never, assuredly, was there an age, since the coming of our Saviour, so marked for incredulity, and for that species of it, which the apostle indicates, as the present one. It would seem as if we were bordering on the great general apostacy, which it is believed, will take place before the final consummation of all things. *Do you think*, says our Saviour, *when the son of man comes, that he will find faith upon the earth ?* Luke xviii. 8.

All this infidelity, the unhallowed fruit of that pretended Reformation, which leaves every thing in religion to the arbitrary decision and determination of every one's private judgment, even to that of a Johanna Southcot in England, or a Jemima Wilkinson in America, the apostle seems to have clearly foreseen. And, wishing to guard the faithful against it, assures them, that *the Lord will not delay his promise, as some imagine ; but that he deals patiently on their account ; not wishing any to perish, but that all may return to penance. For the day of the Lord, continues he, shall come as a thief, on which the heavens shall pass away with great violence ; and the elements shall be melted with heat ; and the earth and the things that are in it, shall be burnt.* Alluding therefore, one would think, to the time that must elapse before that dreadful day appears, he exhorts us all to have particularly in our recollection this one thing, that *one day with the Lord is as a thousand years ; and a thousand years as one day.* In order to understand the mystery which these words seem to imply ; we must recollect that God created the world in six days, and rested from his labour on the seventh. Not that he required any given time to create the universe, which, with one act of his will he could have called forth from nothing ; that he needed, as if fatigued, any rest from his labour : but because he annexed to that division of time a mysterious meaning of some great and serious import, having thus thought proper to establish and observe it himself in his own external operations, and afterwards so strictly to enjoin its