

but I have lived below its privileges. I have had large opportunities given me, but I have not improved them as I might. I have been led astray by the *vanity of human learning, and by the love of human applause.*"

How insignificant are the highest intellectual endowments, and the most extensive erudition, when compared with the Christian character. In the light of the invisible world just dawning upon his vision, he exclaimed, more than once, "O, the vanity of human learning?" "O, the folly of human applause?" And then he would dwell with evident satisfaction upon the text, which he so often repeated in his last moments—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And after the power of distinct articulation was gone, and he was almost in the embrace of death, when his kind clergyman repeated the words, "Behold the Lamb of God!" he added, as the last effort of his expiring breath, "who taketh away the sins of the world."

For this brief outline of the life and death of the learned and excellent author of the "Book of Nature," I am indebted chiefly to "Dr. Gregory's Memoirs," and to the able review of that work in the "Christian Spectator." And although precluded by the limits of this sketch from entering into numerous details of his writings, learning, and virtues, which possess an enduring interest; yet enough is here recorded to afford matter for much useful reflection and improvement to the philosopher, the philanthropist, and the Christian. And the profession of medicine is here seen to be honoured in the life of one of its most enlightened and zealous votaries, who superadded to his high literary and professional attainments the still higher character of a sincere and consistent Christian philosopher, bequeathing to us and to posterity his bright example, to be inscribed with those of Boerhaave, Haller, Mead, and Rush, on the tablet of our memories, stimulating us to emulate their virtues, that we may, like them, have a peaceful death, cheered by the hope of a blissful immortality.

THE

BOOK OF NATURE.

B

PREFACE.

THE present volume, which is designed to take a systematic, but popular, survey of the most interesting features of the general SCIENCE OF NATURE, for the purpose of elucidating what has been found obscure, controverting and correcting what has been felt erroneous, and developing, by new and original views and hypotheses, much of what yet remains to be more satisfactorily explained, derives its origin from the following circumstances:—

Towards the close of the year 1810, the author had the honour of receiving a visit from a deputation of the Directors of the SURREY INSTITUTION, founded on what had been antecedently the LEVERIAN MUSEUM, with a request on the part of their Chairman, Dr. Adam Clarke, that he would undertake a department of lectures in that literary and scientific establishment; with the generous offer of leaving to himself a nomination of time, terms, and subject. He regretted his inability of acceding to so kind a request at that particular period; but being a little more at liberty not long afterward, he readily consented, on a second application by Dr. Lettsom and other Directors; and the ensuing volume contains the course of study he ventured to make choice of; the lectures having been divided into series, and delivered in successive years.

It was his intention to have carried the plan to a somewhat more protracted extent, though the present is sufficiently complete for the outline laid down; but, though earnestly and repeatedly pressed to proceed farther, or even to go over the same lectures again, an augmented sphere of professional duties compelled him, with much reluctance, to decline the invitation; and the same cause has prevented him, till the present period, from fulfilling a subsequent request to submit them to the public; though he has always intended to do so as soon as he could find leisure.

As the lectures were delivered from general recollection, though with the author's manuscript at hand, it is possible that those who took notes may find a few passages in the present text slightly varied from what was

uttered at the time. Yet he believes that, upon an accurate examination, such discrepancies will be found but few, and of no importance.

The INSTITUTION has had its day, but it set in glory, and had the satisfaction of reaping its own reward. Its proprietary shares, like those of every other literary institution in this metropolis, were soon found to have been fixed at too low a price. And, a difficulty having been experienced in obtaining the consent of every proprietor to an adequate additional subscription, it was wisely resolved, almost from the first, to make a yearly encroachment upon the capital, and to maintain the Institution at its zenith of vigour and activity till the whole of such capital should be expended, rather than to let it live through a feeble and inefficient existence, though for a longer period of time, by limiting it to the narrow scale of its annual income alone.

To the crowded and persevering audience by which, from year to year, the author had the gratification of being surrounded, many of whom are yet within the circle of his acquaintance and friendship, he still looks back with gratitude; and can never forget the ardour and punctuality of their attendance. It is a lively recollection, indeed, of the manner in which his labours were received, when delivered, that chiefly induces him to hope for a favourable reception of them in their present form.

The progress of time, and the mental activity with which it has been followed up, have strikingly confirmed various hints and opinions which he ventured to suggest as he proceeded, and have introduced a few novel-
ties into one or two branches of science since the period referred to; but the interval which has hereby occurred has enabled the author to keep pace with the general march of the day, and to pay due attention to such doctrines or discoveries in their respective positions of time and place.

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