

C O S M O S.

DELINEATION OF NATURE. GENERAL REVIEW OF NATURAL PHENOMENA.

WHEN the human mind first attempts to subject to its control the world of physical phenomena, and strives by meditative contemplation to penetrate the rich luxuriance of living nature, and the mingled web of free and restricted natural forces, man feels himself raised to a height from whence, as he embraces the vast horizon, individual things blend together in varied groups, and appear as if shrouded in a vapory veil. These figurative expressions are used in order to illustrate the point of view from whence we would consider the universe both in its celestial and terrestrial sphere. I am not insensible of the boldness of such an undertaking. Among all the forms of exposition to which these pages are devoted, there is none more difficult than the general delineation of nature, which we purpose sketching, since we must not allow ourselves to be overpowered by a sense of the stupendous richness and variety of the forms presented to us, but must dwell only on the consideration of masses either possessing actual magnitude, or borrowing its semblance from the associations awakened within the subjective sphere of ideas. It is by a separation and classification of phenomena, by an intuitive insight into the play of obscure forces, and by animated expressions, in which the perceptible spectacle is reflected with vivid truthfulness, that we may hope to comprehend and describe the *universal all* ($\tau\acute{o}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$) in a manner worthy of the dignity of the word *Cosmos* in its signification of *universe*, *order of the world*, and *adornment* of this universal order. May the immeasurable diversity of phenomena which crowd into the picture of nature in no way detract from that harmonious impression of rest and unity which is the ultimate object of every literary or purely artistical composition.

Beginning with the depths of space and the regions of remotest nebulae, we will gradually descend through the starry zone to which our solar system belongs, to our own terrestrial spheroid, circled by air and ocean, there to direct our atten-