

C O S M O S.

P A R T I.

INCITEMENTS TO THE STUDY OF NATURE.

THE IMAGE REFLECTED BY THE EXTERNAL WORLD ON THE IMAGINATION.—POETIC DESCRIPTION OF NATURE.—LANDSCAPE PAINTING.—THE CULTIVATION OF EXOTIC PLANTS, WHICH CHARACTERIZE THE VEGETABLE PHYSIOGNOMY OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE.

WE are now about to proceed from the sphere of objects to that of sensations. The main results of observation, which, stripped of all the extraneous charms of fancy, belong to the purely objective domain of a scientific delineation of nature, have been considered in the former part of this work in the mutually connected relations, by which they constitute one sole picture of the universe. It now, therefore, remains for us to consider the impressions reflected by the external senses on the feelings, and on the poetic imagination of mankind. An inner world is here opened before us, but in seeking to penetrate its mysterious depths, we do not aspire, in turning over the leaves of the great book of Nature, to arrive at that solution of its problems which is required by the philosophy of art in tracing æsthetic actions through the psychical powers of the mind, or through the various manifestations of intellectual activity, but rather to depict the contemplation of natural objects as a means of exciting a pure love of nature, and to investigate the causes which, especially in recent times, have, by the active medium of the imagination, so powerfully encouraged the study of nature and the predilection for distant travels.* The inducements which promote such contemplations of nature are, as I have already remarked, of three different kinds, namely, the æsthetic treatment of natural scenery by animated delineations of animal and vegetable forms, constituting a very recent branch of literature; landscape painting, especially where it has caught the characteristic features of the animal and vegetable world; and the

* See vol. i., p. 57.