

THE
POETRY OF ASTRONOMY

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A SERIES OF FAMILIAR ESSAYS ON THE
HEAVENLY BODIES, REGARDED LESS IN THEIR STRICTLY
SCIENTIFIC ASPECT THAN AS SUGGESTING THOUGHTS RESPECTING
INFINITIES OF TIME AND SPACE, OF VARIETY,
OF VITALITY, AND OF DEVELOPMENT

BY

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‘THE BORDERLAND OF SCIENCE’ ‘SCIENCE BYWAYS’ ‘THE EXPANSE OF HEAVEN’
‘OUR PLACE AMONG INFINITIES’ ETC.

Profounder, profounder man's spirit must dive :
To its aye-rolling orbit no goal can arrive :
The heavens that now draw him with sweetness untold
Once found—for new heavens man spurneth the old

EMERSON

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PREFACE.

MANY think that science cannot truly be called science if clothed in poetic garb, and, on the other hand, others seem to fear that a glory must depart from the face of nature if science scrutinise her mysteries too closely. I believe both these fears to be unfounded—that science need not be less exact though poetry underlie its teachings; while, beautiful and glorious though the ordinary aspect of nature may be, a deeper poetry, a more solemn significance, a greater beauty, and a nobler glory can be recognised in the aspect of nature when science lifts the veil which hides it from the unaided vision. Nay, I believe that no one who studies aright the teachings of the profoundest students of nature will fail to perceive that our Galileos, Keplers, and Newtons, our Priestleys, Faradays, and Tyndalls, have been moved in no small degree by poetic instincts, and that their best scientific work has owed as much to their imagination as to their reasoning and perceptive faculties. And, on the other hand, we find abundant evidence in the