

**THE LITTLE THINGS OF
NATURE CONSIDERED
ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO
THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE**

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The Little Things of Nature Considered Especially in Relation to the Divine Benevolence by Leo Hartley Grindon

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LEO HARTLEY GRINDON

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DIVINE BENEVOLENCE.

BY
LEO HARTLEY GRINDON,
AUTHOR OF "LIFE, ITS NATURE, VARIETIES, AND PHENOMENA;" "THE
MANCHESTER FLORA;" "BRITISH AND GARDEN BOTANY;"
"MANUAL OF BRITISH AND FOREIGN PLANTS," ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Papers make no claim to a scientific character. They are little more than brief notices of a few of the phenomena of nature, given in a way that the least experienced may understand.

The rapid sale of the first edition of this work, and the favour shown by the public towards "Life, its Nature, Varieties, and Phenomena," and to the "British and Garden Botany," have been sources of great satisfaction to me.

85, BUMPFORD STREET, MANCHESTER.

THE VITALITY OF SEEDS.

Among the most wonderful things in Nature are to be reckoned the Eggs of Birds and of other creatures, and the Seeds of Plants. An atom, often not so large as a grain of sand, and apparently endowed with no greater amount of living energy, expands, almost while we watch, into a lively animal; or it unfolds a green point, which, nourished by the rain and sunshine, becomes the architect of a charming flower or a noble tree. Did we not behold the miracle repeated incessantly before our eyes, it would be difficult to believe that life could be so concentrated; but, like all other grand truths, it comes before us so much as a matter of course, that we are apt to overlook its marvellousness, bestowing our highest and foremost admiration upon the brilliant and the sonorous,—the lightning, the awful roll of the cloud-born thunder, or the beautiful upward-streaming glory of the Aurora. No doubt these are things that deserve our deep and most reverent

interest, alike on account of their incomparable grandeur as natural phenomena, and of their fine significance as emblems of realities in the inner, invisible world. We should, however, accustom ourselves to consider, with an equal delight, the common every-day occurrences by which nature is sustained, and upon which we depend for our personal and daily comfort.

It is a great mistake to suppose, that to find the most striking illustrations of the Divine Love and Wisdom in the arrangements of the visible creation, we are necessitated to look at what is immense and magnificent. Just as the happiness of life does not depend upon the half-dozen memorable enjoyments that make certain years and days stand out in the annals of our past, like the green and palmy islands of the desert to the traveller, but upon the small and unconsidered blessings that come fresh and fresh every hour and every moment; so does a truly intelligent idea of the munificence, the skill, the taste,—if such terms may be used,—also of the far-reaching providence that anticipates every want before it can possibly be felt, and of the ease and the infinite power of Him who holds the heavens in his hands, come less of the consideration of mighty phenomena that happen rarely, and rather as exceptions, than of the daily observation of that

quiet and pretty ripple of life through the tiny and tender forms of bee and butterfly, flower and fern, and feathered moss, which imparts a kind of immortality to the scenery amid which we tread, and makes us cry out, with old Isaac Walton, as he listened to the song of the nightingale, "O Lord! if these be thy gifts to thy creatures upon earth, what hast thou not prepared for thy saints in heaven!"

The preservation of the vital spark in Seeds, and its sudden burst into vegetable fire when kindled under the laws that at once protect and call it forth, is exemplified as well as we could desire in the most ordinary operations of horticulture. When the parent plant decays, those little germs in which, with a loving farewell, it wraps up its best energies, along with incredible capacity for bright colour, and sweet smell, and grateful taste, are collected by the gardener, carefully dried, and put away; every seed, he well knows, is a storehouse of sleeping life, which, with the return of Spring, if placed where rain and sunshine can pay alternate visits, will leap into green infancy of fair blossom or wholesome vegetable. Nothing more is wanted to prove the *fact*; but over and above this ordinary, familiar proof, there is a class of occurrences less known than they deserve to be, which are calculated to excite our wonder