

advance this improvement, is the principal design of our present undertaking. No subject appears more interesting than that we have chosen, and none seems capable of being handled in a manner that may render it more generally useful. -

The knowledge of the world, and of its inhabitants, though not the sublimest pursuit of mankind, it must be allowed, is that which most nearly interests them, and to which their abilities are best adapted. And books of Geography, which describe the situation, extent, soil, and productions of kingdoms; the genius, manners, religion, government, commerce, sciences, and arts, of all the inhabitants upon earth, promise the best assistance for attaining this knowledge.

The compendium of Geography we now offer to the Public, differs in many particulars from other books on that subject. Besides exhibiting an easy, distinct, and systematic account of the theory and practice of what may be called Natural Geography, the Author has attempted to render the following performance an instructive, though compendious, detail of the general history of the world. The character of nations depends on a combination of a great many circumstances, which reciprocally affect each other. There is a nearer connection between the learning, the commerce, the government, &c. of a state, than most people seem to apprehend. In a work of this kind, which pretends to include moral, or political, as well as natural Geography, no one of these objects should pass unnoticed. The omission of any one of them would, in reality, deprive us of a branch of knowledge, not only interesting in itself, but which is absolutely necessary for enabling us to form an adequate and comprehensive notion of the subject in general. We have thought it necessary, therefore, to add a new article to this work, which comprehends the history and present state of learning in the several countries we describe, with the characters of such persons as have been most eminent in the various departments of letters and philosophy. This subject will, on a little reflection, appear altogether requisite, when we consider the powerful influence of learning upon the manners, government, and general character of nations. These objects, indeed, till of late, seldom found a place in geographical perform-