

PREFACE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the vast number of initiatory books for young children, which have been written within these few years by persons of distinguished abilities, and sanctioned with their names, it must still be allowed that there has not appeared a single introduction to Reading, for the general use of Schools, that rises above the level of the vulgar, though popular, compilations of Dyehe, Dilworth, and Fenning.

For the neglect which we have alluded to, it would be impossible to produce any consistent reason. Perhaps the pride of acknowledged literature could not stoop to an occupation reputed so mean as that of compiling a SPELLING BOOK. Yet to lay the first stone of a noble edifice has ever been a task delegated to honourable hands; and to sow the first seeds of useful learning in the nascent mind, is an employment that can reflect no discredit on the most illustrious talents.

Our sentiments and our conduct are much more influenced by early impressions than many seem willing to allow. The stream will always flow tinged with the nature of its source: a just maxim, a humane principle, a germ of knowledge early imbibed, will be permanent and fixed. The first books we read can never be forgotten, nor the morals they inculcate be eradicated.

Hence, in the compilation of this little Volume, care has been taken to make every lesson or essay, as far as the nature and intention of the plan would allow, tend to some useful purpose of information or instruction. Even in the more easy progressive lessons, it is hoped something will be found either to please or improve. The *Appendix* may be learned by heart, in part or wholly, at the discretion of the master. The short Prayers and Catechism of the Church ought early to be taught; for that education must always be defective, and even dangerous, which has not religion for its foundation!