

By what arguments can we extenuate our neglect of so important a duty to our countrymen and fellow-christians? No diligence on our part, no activity, no labours however great, can prove that we have been faithful to their interest; so long as we entirely overlook the means, which we know to be most effectual for their instruction.

“BUT the publications which many persons read, are trifling, or improper; some so manifestly useless that the perusal of them can be considered as, in no respect, different from idleness; and others directly immoral and flagitious in their tendency. Numbers of the novels and comedies which persons possessing a little information, devour most greedily, are either so completely insignificant, or so pernicious; that it has been doubted, with great appearance of truth, whether those who confine themselves to such reading, would not have been happier, had they never learned to read.”

SUCH is the full extent of one of the strongest objections that have ever been brought against the diffusion of the art of reading. But it must be observed, that the abuses to which this art may be turned, can never prove that it is not, in itself, a most valuable attainment. They can never balance the numerous advantages which this art brings to its possessor. As well might it be said that the gift of reason is useless or pernicious, because thousands every day abuse it, either to the injury of others, or their own destruction. With equal justice, we might decry all civil power, and all political institutions, because many are the disappointments and distresses