

P R E F A C E.

It cannot be denied that the philosophical writings of Cicero have not in recent years received much of the attention of English readers; and especially that they have been scarcely at all read at the Universities, where it is evident that they were studied down to the beginning of the present century. This is peculiarly true of the treatise *De Finibus*, of which no edition has appeared in England since the Oxford one of 1809, nor any new critical edition since 1783.

This is, no doubt, in part, owing to a cause which in itself no one can regret, viz., the increased attention given within the last twenty or thirty years to the writings of Aristotle and Plato; and especially to the place occupied by the *Ethics* of Aristotle. This work has several advantages over the moral writings of Cicero. It is an original composition, whereas the philosophical writings of Cicero are for the most part compilations. Then there is a vigour of thought, a searching patience of investigation, an accuracy of comparison, a minute analysis of idea about Aristotle, to which there is nothing corresponding in Cicero. In addition, there is the superior elasticity, closeness, and expressiveness of the Greek language, which (notwithstanding the reclamations of Cicero) cannot fail of being acknowledged and felt.

But, granting this, there appears no sufficient reason why the philosophical writings of Cicero should be altogether abandoned as a study. Even the *Offices*, which are now merely read as a school-book, exhibit features worthy the attention of any thinking mind. They contain an acknowledgement which is not to be found in the *Ethics* of