
T H E

P R E F A C E.

IF we consider Man as an inhabitant of the Earth, as a reasonable Being endued with curiosity, as a member of Society, and as connected by commerce, and the interchange of arts and manufactures, with the most distant nations, few studies can appear of such importance, or procure more rational, more useful entertainment, than that of Geography. How great are the intellectual advantages arising from the contemplation of the different Religions, Manners, and Customs of our fellow-creatures! How adapted is this pleasing study, not only to gratify the most unbounded curiosity, but to enlarge the mind, to banish prejudices, and to make us set a just estimate on our real characters and advantages! By examining the History of the human Heart, and the uncultivated Mind, in various regions, where the absurdest Prejudices usurp the place of Reason; and Cruelty, Vice, Folly, and Tyranny are sanctified by the venerable name of Religion; we shall see how much we owe to Education, to the Embellishments of Science, and to the Purity of our Holy Religion—how much we are indebted to Providence for many peculiar blessings—how much to Heaven and our brave Forefathers, for the System of Religious and Civil Liberty handed down to us!

Even the various face of the Countries, from the sultry Tropics to the frozen Poles, must afford a constant source of amusement and delight. Here extensive plains and gently rising hills, enamelled with flowers and adorned with fragrant groves; while, with these blessings, the wretched inhabitants faint under the too ardent rays of the scorching sun, and bend under the yoke of slavery. There sandy deserts, displaying a dreary waste: here lofty mountains, raising their snowy summits above the clouds. What a pleasing amusement will the most curious species of Trees and Shrubs, of Birds and Beasts, of Insects and Reptiles, of Amphibious Animals and Fishes, of Fossils and Minerals, afford the inquisitive mind! The Reader will insensibly know the astonishing works of Nature, and will become acquainted with Natural History almost without design. While he who is versed in the Transactions of Antient Times, will see once populous cities only distinguished by splendid ruins; and the capitals of mighty empires destroyed, and lying in the midst of deserts. The Man of Humanity, and the Friend of Liberty, will, through this work, have frequent cause to pity the unhappy nations subject to the despotic tyranny of lewd and ambitious princes: fertile countries rendered deserts by lawless rapine, and the few inhabitants involved