

PREFACE.

There exists among teachers a considerable diversity of opinion as to the place which a Reading Book ought to occupy in the education of youth. On the one hand, it is maintained that such a book ought to be an epitome of universal knowledge, and that the value of each lesson should be estimated by the amount of information it contains, no matter whether interesting to the reader or not; it is upon this principle that the more advanced volumes of the "Irish National Series" have been compiled. On the other hand, it is contended that the sole and simple aim of a book of this character should be, to teach the art of reading; and many of the most modern School Readers have been prepared in accordance with this view. In the present book, and throughout the whole of the Series, the plan adopted is, to combine the advantages of both systems without their disadvantages, or in other words, to convey information in an interesting manner, to endeavour to excite and stimulate the curiosity of the scholar to further researches by extracts which shall not merely convey instruction, but will at once attract his attention and will convert a study into a pleasure.

The lessons in this, as well as in the other advanced books of the Series, have been selected from the works of authors, respectable not only for their merit but also for their elegance of style; thus preserving the true character of the Series, as intended to teach the Art of Reading. The names of such men as Brougham, Maury, Hugh Miller, Darwin, Dickens, Livingstone, Gosse, Kane, Smiles, Macaulay, Gibbon, Bulwer, Robertson, Warburton, &c., are a sufficient guarantee for the literary character of the work.

One important feature in this and its companion book, the 6th, to which the attention of teachers is directed, is the systematic arrangement of the subjects, by which it is hoped that the pupil may be led to that most important step towards sound scholarship—the accurate classification of all knowledge acquired.

No attempt has been made to give an *epitome* of any science whatever. Under the headings of the Physical and Historical Sciences, the scholar is systematically and progressively introduced

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