

## ADDRESS TO THE READER.

SINCE the publication of a New System of Geography upwards of ten years have elapsed, so that the important events which have occurred during that period, are wholly omitted in the old works; a circumstance which must render them very imperfect, as Captain Cook's last voyage, which contains such important information, was published after the expiration of that time. Besides, since the death of Capt. Cook, Capt. Wilson has produced a narrative of the discovery of the Pelew Islands, which abounds with entertaining and novel matter. Travels into the Interior Parts of America have also been published; and lastly, a narrative by an officer employed in the last expedition to Botany Bay, which affords an account of the behaviour of the convicts, the operations at Port Jackson, and the rise and progress of the New Colony established there. These particulars, we presume, will stamp a value upon the present undertaking, as they are not to be found in any other System of Geography.

The considerable number of new discoveries in Geography which have been made in the course of the last twenty years, by various enterprising navigators, has opened to us such a NEW WORLD, that it is now become a science more generally studied than any other subject whatever. Nor is it to be wondered at, when we advert to the fund of useful information, and pleasing entertainment, which has been derived from the different accounts of the respective adventurers.

The sanction of government, and particular patronage of majesty, have conducted most essentially to extend the pursuit of geographical knowledge; inasmuch, that if we take a view of the discoveries that have been made within the last twenty years, we shall find that they exceed, in number, all that have been made from the time of Columbus, to that in which our celebrated countryman, Captain Cook, failed on his first expedition, with Captain Wallis, in August, 1766.

The entertainment derived from the perusal of this work is not less than the advantages, as it extends to men of letters, because no history can be properly understood without a knowledge of the science it treats of; to politicians, it being necessary for the understanding the true interests of states and kingdoms; to officers, military and naval, as informing them of the state of countries, nations, towns, cities, fortifications, sea-coasts, &c. to naturalists, from a description of the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of various climates, which greatly improve their systems; to merchants and traders, as assisting them in taking prudent measures for the advancement and circulation of commerce; and to the curious enquirer, to gratify his desire of universal knowledge, as he will be acquainted with the substance of the most remarkable events and revolutions in the different parts of the world; he will behold new arts and manufactures, new countries, new customs, new inhabitants. And how engaging must it be to speculative enquirers to contemplate on 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? They will see how much they owe to education, to the embellishment of science, to the purity of our holy religion; how much they are indebted to Providence for many peculiar blessings; how much to heaven, and their brave ancestors, for the system of religious and civil liberty handed down to them.

As paintings in miniature set forth the true lineaments of a face, without being the less admired for being small, so this work, though completed in two volumes only, will contain the essence of all the Books of Geography, Voyages, and Travels, that have hitherto been published; from which we shall select their beauties, as a curious florist would the choicest productions of a garden: and we flatter ourselves that, by a strict attention to all that is novel and interesting, we shall furnish a work more comprehensive than any preceding one; for he who would fill his hive, must gather honey from every flower; and poor, indeed, is that weed which yields not a particle of fragrance. As from every essay on the subject of Geography we may glean some information, we have not been sparing of our labour in selecting whatever may be useful or pleasing. For this purpose we have compared different descriptions of the same countries, and wholly relied on persons of acknowledged veracity and good sense, who were eye witnesses of what they described; and made a proper distinction between the sentiments of the ignorant, the illiterate, the superstitious, and those of persons distinguished by their genius and learning, who examine with philosophical exactness, and describe with critical accuracy.

In our historical accounts a strict impartiality is observed; nor are any circumstances related, but what are duly authenticated. Without attempting to point out the defects of preceding writers on the subject, we shall only observe, that it has been our business to avoid their errors, and to insert the material articles which they have omitted, exploding all fabulous and romantic tales.

To compose a System of Geography replete with novelty, and comprehending every particular that is worthy of notice, is an undertaking too arduous for any individual, whose objects are credit to himself, and satisfaction to the public. We therefore flatter ourselves, from our united efforts, together with the liberal assistance we have received from several literary gentlemen, voyagers, and travellers, that if our System is not superior, it is at least equal to any that has ever yet appeared.

We shall not only consider this terrestrial globe which we inhabit, but shall subjoin a display of the wonderful expanse which surrounds it, and the prodigious globes that revolve in the æther of immensity; by which the reader will be acquainted with the nature and motions of the planets that give us light, of the heat we feel, of the air we breathe, and the meteors we see; and while the various seasons of the earth are explained by the vicissitudes of the heavens, admire the wonders of the creation in the glorious works of the Creator, whose magnitude and splendor evince, that none but an Omnipotent Power could form them.

As the pen, in many instances, is so very inadequate to the pencil, in conveying ideas of the persons, dress, habitations, &c. necessarily introduced in a work of this nature, the Publisher has undertaken the sole management of that department; and, from a consciousness of its great importance, has spared no expence, in employing the best artists; so that we do aver, that, in our opinion, the engravings, &c. excel all that have ever been seen in any collective work of Geography. We do not mean to insinuate that our embellishments are superior to those in Captain Cook's last voyage, as they were executed under the immediate sanction of the King, and at the expence of government.

With respect to the Maps, the same attention has been paid to them as to the Prints. We shall only say, in their commendation, that they are executed by Mr. BOWEN, (son and successor to the late Mr. Bowen, geographer to the King,) who, for truth and accuracy, stands first in the line of this department.

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