

The same causes have, moreover, given to the knowledge of distant countries a peculiar hold on the domestic and social affections. There are few amongst us who have not a near relation, perhaps a brother or a child, residing in another hemisphere. Oceans now separate us from those to whom we are united by the tenderest ties; the objects of our affection have their abode on the banks of the Ganges, or the shores of the Pacific; and many, whose hearts are knit in the closest friendship, are divided from each other by half the earth. In this situation, a description of the place in which our friend or relative dwells, the objects which meet his eye, the society in which he mingles, must afford peculiar gratification, and soothe the mind under this painful separation.

Deeply impressed with a sense of the great extent and difficult execution of a complete geographical work, the Editor, during nearly ten years in which he has been engaged upon it, has used the utmost exertion to procure from every quarter information and aid. He has studiously collected the most recent, authentic, and accurate accounts of the extent, natural features, population, productions, industry, political constitution, literature, religion, and social state of the various regions of the globe, with the leading details as to their districts and cities. The sciences connected with the natural history of the earth have, however, attained to such an extent and importance, that a thorough knowledge of them can only be possessed by individuals who have specially devoted themselves to one particular branch. The Editor, therefore, considered it essential to procure the co-operation of writers who had risen to acknowledged eminence in the departments of Geology and Mineralogy, Zoology and Botany. He considered that he had fully succeeded, when Professor Jameson undertook to delineate the geological structure of the globe, and the distribution of minerals over its surface; Mr. Swainson to explain the distribution of animals, and the most remarkable of those found in each particular region; and Dr. Hooker to perform the same task in regard to the vegetable kingdom. Professor Wallace has illustrated the relations of the earth as a planet, the trigonometrical surveys, the construction of maps, and other subjects connected with mathematical science. These tasks have been executed in a manner which, it is hoped, will fully support the high reputation of their respective authors. In preparing the sections relating to commerce, the editor derived much assistance from Mr. McCulloch's Dictionary of Commerce, and he is also indebted to that gentleman for many valuable communications. Various parts relating to remote countries have been revised by gentlemen recently returned from them.

The Maps, which are so numerous as to form a complete Atlas, have been executed from drawings by Hall; and having been carefully revised by the Editor, they will, it is hoped, be found to be accurate, and to include all the most recent discoveries. Notwithstanding the smallness of the scale, they are illustrated by the letter-press in a manner which enables them to comprise equal information with others of much larger dimensions.

The other Wood Engravings are mostly original, or have been carefully selected from the most faithful representations of the objects described; and they are executed in the best style by the eminent artists whose names appear on the title-page. They exhibit the most remarkable plants and animals, the chief cities, public buildings, natural curiosities, and picturesque scenery, with the characteristic figures and costumes of the natives, in the countries described. It is not believed that any work of this kind is similarly embellished, at least to nearly the same extent. These representations are by no means introduced for the sake of mere ornament; they will be found of the greatest utility, conveying an infinitely better idea of the objects than could be derived from the most laboured description.

Notwithstanding all these efforts, it is impossible to lay this volume before the Public without the painful reflection, that, in a subject involving such an infinite number and variety of details, many of which are often very difficult to procure, not a few imperfections and even errors must inevitably occur. M. Balbi, whose exertions to collect the most recent geographical information are well known, and to whose labours the present volume is much indebted, candidly observes:—"One of the greatest obstacles to be surmounted in the composition of an elementary treatise of Geography is the want of contemporary documents. Geography is almost necessarily a compound of things which are, with things which have ceased to be. How can one be informed of all the changes that take place in the course of a few years, even in the capitals of Europe, still more in those of Asia, Africa, and America? To compose a Geography which should exhibit a complete picture of the globe at a particular period, it would be necessary to have authentic documents, all of the same date and that a recent one; which never has been, and never can be."