

PREFACE.

The utility of this undertaking at a crisis, when the taste for botanical pursuits so universally prevails, will, it is presumed, be readily admitted by all those engaged in them, whether as theorists, collectors, or cultivators. Such a work, under the immediate direction of some principal leader in the science, of this country, has been a desideratum of long expectance; but either from the great expense necessarily incurred, before any adequate return could be made, or from the trouble attendant on publications, where colouring forms so considerable a part, as yet, every similar attempt has proved abortive. The Bot. Mag. of Mr. Curtis, a work of singular merit in its way, has occasionally furnished, it is true, a few specimens of new plants; but the greatest part, as its title-page indicates, consists of those well known, common plants, long cultivated in our gardens; the direct reverse of the proposals and intentions of the author, in the prosecution of this. From a wish to prevent confusion, it was a determined principle at the outset of the work, not to give any generic or specific synonyms, but to follow the most generally accepted names, of known and named plants, without a cavil of our best English botanists or cultivators, if no flagrant error was perceptible, according to the Linnaean system: being satisfied, nothing contributed so much to repress the ardor of young botanists as the difficulty of affixing the right name to those plants, which, (from a captious desire in every publisher, to foist in something of his own coinage, upon the most titling supposed difference,) have undergone several changes of title. If the plant was a certain novelty, with us, to have followed the sexual system, without a schism; upon that truly grand and comprehensive scale of nature; when the formation of a new genus was necessary; if not, to refer it to someone already made, if such was to be found, in any orthodox author; the specific name to be formed from some opposed, leading feature, in the habits of the different species of the genus. But although such were the Author's intentions, when he entered on this business, yet, from a wish to oblige many of the supporters of the work, who have signified a wish that synonyms should be given, an alphabetical index, with all the various synonyms collated from the best authorities, shall be printed separate for the use of those who may wish for such an addition.

As a fair excuse for the Author, (who throws himself upon the cantor of the public,) in extenuation of the inaccuracies which have, and will necessarily occur in the prosecution of the work, it is just to say, that the difficulties to be encountered, and of which none but those engaged in similar concerns can form any adequate idea, are incalculable; arising chiefly from the nature of a monthly publication, composed entirely of novelty, which cannot be anticipated, and of course, so very little time can be allotted for revisal or correction. To remedy as far as possible such slips, a list of errata will be given, with the index, at the close of each volume.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE, Oct. 1799.