

SELECT

FABLES OF ESOP

AND OTHER

FABULISTS.

IN THREE BOOKS.

ANCIENT, MODERN, AND ORIGINAL.

By R. DODSLEY.

Is not the earth
With various living CREATURES, and the air
Replenished, and all those at thy command
To come and play before thee? Knowest thou not
Their language and their ways? They also know,
And reason not contemptibly: with these
Find pastime. Paradise Lost, b. 8. l. 370.

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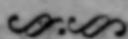
PREFACE.

THE fables of Esop have always been esteemed the best lessons for youth, as being well adapted to convey the most useful maxims, in a very agreeable manner. Accordingly, many writers, both in verse and prose, have endeavoured to clothe them in an English dress. It would ill become the author of this work to animadvert upon their labours; but he thinks it may be said with truth, and he hopes with modesty, that nothing of this kind, which has been published in prose, can justly discourage him from the present undertaking.

In forming this collection, he has endeavoured to distinguish, by two separate books, the respective compositions of the earlier and later mythologists; and he trusts it will not be found that he has often been mistaken in this distribution, though an error of that kind might perhaps appear of no great importance. His principal aim was to select such fables as would make the strongest and most useful impressions on the minds of youth; and then to offer them in such unaffected language, as might have some tendency to improve their style. If in this he should be allowed to have at all succeeded, the work, it is presumed, will not be unserviceable to young readers, nor wholly unentertaining to persons of maturer judgment.

To these he has ventured to add a third book, consisting entirely of original fables; and he offers it to the Public with all the diffidence which ought to accompany modern productions, when they appear in conjunction with writings of established reputation. Indeed, whatsoever hopes he has, that the present work may be favourably received, arise chiefly

PREFACE.



from the consideration, that he has been assisted in it by gentlemen of the most distinguished abilities; and that several, both of the old and new fables, are not written by himself, but by authors with whom it is an honour to be connected; and who having condescended to favour him with their assistance, have given him an opportunity of making some atonements for his own defects.

The life of Esop prefixed to the former editions of these fables, having been thought not so full and satisfactory as it might have been, a learned and ingenious friend has been so kind as to consult the ancient writers who have made any mention of Esop. He hopes he has added many facts and anecdotes of his life, not hitherto taken notice of; and that he has set his character in a clearer and better light than it has hitherto appeared.



admired, would be the consequence of my being known. But it has sometimes been my lot, in the lonesome vallies that I frequent, to hear the complaints of beauty that has been neglected; and of worth that has been despised. Possibly it does not always happen, that even superior excellence is found to excite admiration, or to obtain encouragement. I have learned besides, not to build my happiness upon the opinion of others, so much as upon self-conviction, and the approbation of my own heart. Remember, I am a king-fisher; these woods and streams are my delight; and so long as they are free from winds and tempests, believe me, I am perfectly content with my situation. Why therefore should I court the noise and bustle of the world, which I find so little agreeable to my native disposition? It may be the joy of a sparrow to indulge his curiosity, and to display his eloquence. I, for my part, love silence, privacy, and contemplation; and think that every one should consult the native bias of his temper, before he chuses the way of life in which he expects to meet with happiness."

Fable 52. SPIDER and BEE.

ON the leaves and flowers of the same shrub a spider and a bee pursued their several occupations; the one covering her thighs with honey; the other distending his bag with poison. The spider, as he glanced his eye obliquely at the bee, was ruminating with spleen on the superiority of her productions. "And how happens it," said he, in a peevish tone, "that I am able to collect nothing but poison from the self-same plant that supplies thee with honey? My pains and industry are no less than thine; in those respects we are each indefatigable."—"It proceeds only," replied the bee, "from the different disposition of our nature: mine gives a pleasing flavour to every thing I touch, whereas thine converts to poison, what by a different process had been the purest honey."