

**A CATECHISM OF FAMILIAR THINGS;  
THEIR HISTORY, AND THE EVENTS WHICH  
LED TO THEIR DISCOVERY. WITH A  
SHORT EXPLANATION OF SOME OF THE  
PRINCIPAL NATURAL PHENOMENA. FOR  
THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

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A Catechism of Familiar Things; Their History, and the Events Which Led to Their Discovery.  
With a Short Explanation of Some of the Principal Natural Phenomena. For the Use of Schools  
and Families by Emily Elizabeth Willement

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**EMILY ELIZABETH WILLEMENT**

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A CATECHISM  
OF  
FAMILIAR THINGS.

*From Critical Notices of the First Edition.*

"This Book presents a mass of information in a condensed form on all kinds of things which enter into the every-day concerns of life: the air we breathe—the food we eat—the raiment we are clothed with—the habitations we dwell in—the constitution of our mortal frame—arts, commerce, and manufactures, are cleverly treated of, by question and answer; and form a mine of useful information. We recommend it to the attention of parents and tutors."—*Essex Standard*.

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## PREFACE.

THE great success of the first edition of this little volume, and the high eulogiums bestowed on it by its generous patrons, have induced me to bring out a Second Edition, which I have taken great pains to render still more worthy of approbation, by several important additions, and a most careful revision. The book itself also is now presented in a more convenient form, and much improved in outward appearance, type, &c. without any increase in price. I wish especially to direct the attention of Parents and Teachers to the necessity of possessing a work calculated to save them much fatigue in the responsible office of education. The subjects contained in it may seem in themselves unimportant or insignificant: but do not children often ask a variety of questions on these very subjects, at times when the parent or teacher is not at leisure to answer them properly?—questions on the most simple subjects, asked in such a manner as to puzzle the cleverest! Besides, is there *one* thing used by us in the daily business of life without its historical interest? Decidedly not,—although, from their commonness, many are passed by as unimportant. I consider that to trace them to their source is not only amusing, but highly instructive, for there is scarcely one which is not connected with some epoch important in the history of the world.

Here, then, is a book which, I flatter myself, will answer every purpose, as it can be instantly referred to for the required answer, by means of the index. It is very necessary that children should know the construction of things in common use; the wonders of the natural world; and the manner in which the productions of the earth are made subservient to the use of

man;—for, without this, their knowledge is only superficial. How should children acquire this knowledge, unless their questions obtain clear and intelligent answers? Another advantage also (and for which I have received the commendation of many able teachers) is, the insertion of the meaning of the most difficult words or terms occurring in each answer, at the end of it,—thereby saving the trouble of explanation or reference to a dictionary; both of which are too apt, for want of time, to be passed over, especially in large seminaries, where everything is obliged to be done with dispatch.

There may be other works on a similar plan; but the subjects have not been carried out so minutely as in the one now presented, which embraces their whole history, and traces their different stages of improvement, &c. History, Geography, Arts and Sciences, Manufactures, Productions of the Animal, Vegetable and Mineral Kingdoms, and the Wonders of the Elements, are here exhibited in an engaging aspect. Youth is fond of novelty; and every day there is some new work published:—surely, then, I may hope that mine may take no mean place among them; and its object will be accomplished if it increase the stock of knowledge in the minds of young people.

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The former editions of this work being all circulated, and the American press having published the same with a few additions, it was thought advisable to add them to the present New Edition, which has not only been carefully revised, but extended much further, by embracing several subjects of a recent date.

E. E. W.

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