

## P R E F A C E.

though there may be a sea, yet that this sea has in it a multitude of islands of different sizes. All these, however, are no better than conjectures, upon which no great stress is to be laid, and therefore we must wait for the solution of the question, till the same spirit of discovery that brought us first acquainted with the Indies and with America, reveals to us, with equal certainty, whether it is sea or land, or a mixture of both, that intervenes between those two mighty continents.

It is requisite to observe, that this is far from being a matter of idle speculation, so far from it, there are very few disquisitions that can be justly stiled of greater consequence; as rational beings, it concerns us to have a perfect and complete notion of the globe which we inhabit, and we see that in this respect, providence has very wisely given the spur of curiosity, to the pursuit of what is our real interest. As the subjects of a maritime power, we have the greater concern in it, since every discovery of this kind must affect our navigation or commerce, nearly or remotely. But with respect to this before us, it is of the utmost importance, since all our at-