
P R E F A C E.

THE progress of science has been but little promoted by royal countenance ; the diffusion of knowledge has been generally obnoxious to the views of power ; if the reformation in England found a supporter in the despot that ruled, it must be attributed to its furthering his political designs, not to his cordial love of truth, and readiness to encourage free enquiries concerning it ; and whenever kings become professedly patrons of the arts, those that have a tendency to soften and debilitate a state are more likely to be encouraged, because most congenial to the luxury of an effeminate court, than such as serve in an important manner the interests of humanity.

The voyages that have been undertaken by the order of his present majesty, to explore the South-Sea and Polar Regions, are a striking exception to the