

## P R E F A C E.

---

IN the moral economy of Europe, France is the disturbing element. It is the centre of the divergent, as England seems to be of the converging forces. It is the Etna, whose primal violence now ravages a venerable alluvion and now elevates a new continent rich in the spoils of uncultivated time.

As the centre of Europe, France is always its most commanding object. Its central position with an extensive maritime and strong landward frontier ; its vast, cohesive, and homogeneous population, differing less than that of any nation of like grandeur on the earth, in law, and language, and traditions ; all united by a national spirit as intense as the world ever witnessed, and a centralisation, since the time of Richelieu and Mazarine, more complete than any which has been known since the fall of the Western Roman Empire ; all these, united with a warlike spirit and a noble literature, make France, on the continent, the pivot of the politics of Europe ; as England is, wherever the ocean flows beyond it. It was not without reason that the great Frederic of Prussia said that, if he was the King of France, not a gun should be fired in Europe without his permission.

Of the first French Revolution we have now ample details, and secret memoirs have developed much that was strange, vindicated many fair fames, extenuated some crimes, and illustrated some virtues. Men are not