

P R E F A C E.

THIS volume has had its origin in a series of letters, which I wrote from Rome, in the belief that the subjects of which they treated, and the information which they afforded, would prove of interest to a large circle of readers. The result justified the anticipation; for the letters were extensively copied in this country, as well as in various places in America, and were reprinted in more than one European language. The interest which they excited—or, more correctly speaking, which the information afforded by their details excited—was evidenced by almost innumerable applications made to me, to publish them in some more enduring and permanent form. Many of these applications were urged upon me with a weight of personal authority which I could not attempt to resist; and I therefore resolved to comply with a desire in which I thoroughly sympathized, and the motive of which I perfectly understood,—namely, a wish to encounter, by a representation of