

PREFACE.

THE history of the following remarkable productions of their illustrious author's mind, may be very briefly told. They were written some time ago, with the kind intention of serving a youthful friend, then pursuing his theological studies; but without the slightest idea that they would ever meet the public eye. Circumstances, however, which have occurred since that period, induced the gentleman for whom they were composed, to request the author's permission to publish them for his own benefit, which was cordially granted.

In these Discourses, the reader will find some of the most momentous questions which can exercise the human mind, discussed with great eloquence, ingenuity, and force of argument. Yet it was not without a strong feeling of diffidence, that the writer consented to lay before the public this new and striking proof of the strength and versatility of his genius, as will appear from the following Extract of a Letter.

"The Religious Discourses which you call to my mind, were written entirely for your use, and are therefore your property. They were never intended for publication, as nobody knows better than yourself; nor do I willingly consent that they should be now given to the press, as it may be thought that I have intermeddled with matters for which I have no commission. I have also to add, that they contain no novelty of opinion, and no attempt at brilliancy of composition. They were meant, I may remind you, to show that a rational and practical discourse upon a particular text was a task more easily performed than you, in your natural anxiety seemed at the time disposed to believe. I am afraid that those who open this pamphlet with expectations of a higher kind, will be much disappointed. As, however, you seem to be of opinion, that the publication might be attended with moral benefit to you, I make no objection to it, and will be glad to hear that it suits your purpose. This Letter will sufficiently indicate my consent to any gentleman of the trade with whom you may treat.

I am yours, very sincerely,

"W. S."

Abbotsford, January 2, 1828.