

P R E F A C E.

THE heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it? As far as I know my own, it feels an anxious desire to serve my fellow-creatures, during the short period of my continuance among them, by stopping the effusion of human blood, by diminishing or softening the miseries which man creates for himself, by promoting peace, and by endeavouring to secure and extend civil liberty.

I attribute war, and most of the artificial evils of life, to the Spirit of Despotism, a rank poisonous weed, which grows and flourishes even in the soil of liberty, when over-run with corruption. I have attempted to eradicate it, that the salutary and pleasant plants may have room to strike root and expand their foliage.

There is one circumstance which induces me to think that, in this instance, my heart does not deceive me. I am certain, that in attempting to promote the general happiness of man, without serving any party, or paying court to any individual, I am not studying my own interest. On the contrary I am well aware that my very subject must give offence to those who are possessed of power and patronage. I have no personal enmities, and therefore am truly concerned that I could not treat on the Spirit of Despotism, without advancing opinions that must displease the nominally great. I certainly sacrifice all view of

personal advantage to what appears to me the public good; and flatter myself that this alone evinces the purity of my motive.

Men of feeling and good minds, whose hearts, as the phrase is, lie in the right place, will, I think, agree with me in most points; especially when a little time, and the events, now taking place, shall have dissipated the mist of passion and prejudice. Hard-hearted, proud worldlings, who love themselves only, and know no good but money and pageantry, will scarcely agree with me in any. They will be angry; but, consistently with their general haughtiness, affect contempt to hide their choler.

I pretend not to aspire to the honour of martyrdom: yet some inconveniencies I am ready to bear patiently, in promoting a cause which deeply concerns the whole of the present race, and ages yet unborn. I am ready to bear patiently the proud man's contumely, the insult of rude ignorance, the sarcasm of malice, the hired censure of the sycophantic critic, (whose preferment depends on the prostitution both of knowledge and conscience,) and the virulence of the venal newspaper. It would be a disgrace to an honest man not to incur the abuse of those who have sold their integrity and abilities to the enemies of their country and the human race. Strike, but hear, said a noble ancient. Truth will ultimately prevail, even though he who uttered it should be destroyed. Columbus was despised, rejected, persecuted; but America was discovered. Men very inconsiderable in the eye of pride, have had the honour to discover, divulge, and disseminate doctrines that have promoted the liberty and happiness of the human race. All that was rich and great, in the common acceptation of that epithet, combined against Luther; yet when pontiffs, kings,

and lords, had displayed an impotent rage, and sunk into that oblivion which their personal insignificance naturally led to, Luther prevailed, and his glory is immortal. He broke the chain of superstition, and weakened the bonds of despotism.

I have frequently lifted up my voice—a feeble one indeed—against war, that great promoter of despotism; and while I have liberty to write, I will write for liberty. I plead weakly, indeed, but sincerely, the cause of mankind; and on them, under God, I rely for protection against that merciless spirit which I attempt to explode.