

EXCURSIONS
IN THE INTERIOR OF
RUSSIA;
INCLUDING
SKETCHES OF THE CHARACTER AND POLICY
OF THE
EMPEROR NICHOLAS,
SCENES IN ST. PETERSBURG,
&c. &c.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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P R E F A C E.

THESE volumes chiefly consist of the narrative of a short visit to Russia, during the autumn of 1836, in the course of a general tour through Europe.

Much of what they contain, however, is the fruit of the author's occasional intercourse with Russians in other parts of the continent. Having (on two different occasions) spent in all upwards of five years abroad, he has had it in his power to become acquainted with the manners and sentiments of Russians, under circumstances which enabled them to throw off the mask which, in their own country, few of them can dare to dispense with. To all who know what Russia really is, it is unnecessary to say that it is not *in Russia* that the true state of opinion among the higher classes of that country can be best learned.

To his long residence abroad, during which he paid considerable attention to the various political questions connected with Russia, the author is also indebted for many of the facts given in support of the remarks which he hazards on the policy and character of the present emperor.

Fully aware, however, that neither his visit to Russia, nor his opportunities of becoming acquainted with the opinions of Russians in other countries, can qualify him for doing justice to such an ample theme as that comprised in the present work, he begs of those who may cast their eye on the following pages, that they will regard their contents rather as scraps by the way, than as the complete and well-matured production of the study. In fact the title,—“Excursions” and “Sketches,”—will at once warn the reader that he is here to find only snatches caught by the passing eye, not the full landscape itself—the mere gleanings of a vast and fertile field, not the rich harvest which abler hands would have reaped.

It is also necessary to state that the work was begun on a foreign shore, under circumstances which rendered it impossible to obtain access to books of any value, and has been completed in a beautiful but remote part of Scotland, where it was equally impossible to obtain the aid of any extensive library. It has been entirely written, therefore, from hurried notes kept while travelling, and does not even contain that array of learned names which might have atoned for the want of learning in the author himself.

In fact, conscious as he is of its many defects, he would not have presumed to lay his work

before the public, had he not felt that at a moment like the present, when the most overwhelming interest exists in regard to Russia, it is the duty of every one, who has made that country his study, and endeavoured to obtain correct information concerning it, to give to the world whatever may be calculated to throw light on its actual condition, its prospects, or its resources. This duty is doubly incumbent on those who are anxious, as the author is, to counteract the tendency of some works which have recently appeared on the same subject. The presses of the continent now teem with publications containing the most fulsome praises of Russia, and giving the most overcharged statements of her power and resources; and unfortunately, the presses of England are not altogether ignorant of books written in the same spirit. Were we to take these for our guides, the government of Russia would appear to be the most liberal of all governments, and the people of Russia the happiest of all people. Her strength is held up to us as boundless, irresistible,—as the most formidable, and best consolidated, that ever threatened the liberties and the rights of man. In short, the praises of Russia, which now ring on every side, are of the most exaggerated description.

It would not, perhaps, be difficult to discover the source from which many of these representations proceed; or, at least, to account for the tone