

TO
PREFACE.
THE KING.

SIR,
It is with peculiar fitness, as well as pleasure, that I inscribe to your Majesty a History of the most glorious war recorded in the British annals.

When the Regency devolved into your hands, the fortunes of our allies were at the lowest ebb, and neither arts nor efforts were spared for making the spirit of this country sink with them. At that momentous crisis every thing depended, under Providence, upon your single determination; and to that determination Great Britain is beholden for its triumph, and Europe for its deliverance.

To your Majesty, therefore, this faithful History is offered, as a portion of the tribute due to a just, magnanimous, and splendid reign, and as a proof of individual respect and gratitude from

Your Majesty's

Most dutiful subject and servant,

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

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PREFACE.

EIGHT years have now elapsed since the conclusion of that memorable war which began upon the coast of Portugal, and was brought to its triumphant close before the walls of Toulouse. From the commencement of that contest I entertained the hope and intention of recording its events, being fully persuaded that, if this country should perform its duty as well as the Spaniards and Portuguese would discharge theirs, the issue would be as glorious as the cause was good. Having therefore early begun the history, and sedulously pursued it, it would have been easy for me to have brought it forth while the public, in the exultation of success, were eager for its details. But I was not so unmindful of what was due to them and to the subject; and I waited patiently till, in addition to the means of information which were within my reach, more materials should be supplied by the publications of persons who had been engaged in the war, and till time enough had been allowed for farther consideration and fuller knowledge to correct or confirm the views and opinions which I had formed upon the events as they occurred.

I would have waited longer if there had been any reasonable prospect that the history undertaken by order of the Spanish Government would have been completed. The single volume

which has appeared is written with great ability; and if it had proceeded farther, I might have derived more advantage from it than from any, or all other publications upon the subject. But its progress has been interrupted by the revolution in Spain; and the aspects in that country are so dark, that there can be little hope of seeing it resumed.

A list of the printed documents which have been consulted in this work will be appended to the last volume. For the private sources of information which have been open to him, the author must content himself here with making a general acknowledgement. They are such as might entitle him to assert, that since the publication of Strada's Decades, no history composed by one who was not an actor in it, has appeared with higher claims to authority.

There is a danger in attempting stories of prime importance, lest they should excite expectations which it is fatal to disappoint, and yet impossible to fulfil. Great talents have sunk, and lofty reputations have been wrecked in such attempts. I might well be apprehensive for my own fortune in the present undertaking, were it not for a belief, that in the variety of details which this narration contains, in the importance of its events, in its splendid examples of heroism and virtue, and, above all, in the moral interest that pervades it, the reader will find attractions which may compensate for any defects in the execution of so arduous a work.

KESWICK, July 22, 1822.

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