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NOTES OF A TRAVELLER,
ON THE
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STATE
OF
FRANCE, PRUSSIA, SWITZERLAND,
ITALY,
AND OTHER PARTS OF EUROPE,

During the present Century.

BY

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"A TOUR IN SWEDEN."

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1842.

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LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE

S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

THE present generation stands in a very remarkable historical epoch — at the close of an old state of things in the political and social economy of Europe, and at the rise and formation of a new. Old laws and institutions, the old distribution of property, privilege, and power, no longer rest upon the old basis in any part of Europe, are no longer supported by the universal conformity and implicit faith and acceptance of society. Where they still survive the storm of the French Revolution, they hold but a lingering existence, for the roots in the human mind which supported them are shaken. An aristocracy founded upon property, birth, education, respect of the people, and honour, exists in all its ancient integrity in England only. On the continent, even where the principle of aristocracy is not abolished by an alteration in the feudal law of succession, it is abolished by the precedence given to government employment, civil and military, over all other distinctions, and by the general diffusion among people in no way belonging to the class of nobility, of personal wealth, social influence, high education, refinement of manners, and all that formerly separated aristocracy from the other elements of the social body. None can

claim pre-eminence from possessing what is common to all above the lowest ranks of the community. This natural and unavoidable advance of society it is foolish to lament over, and impossible to retard. It is a result which is working itself out in Europe, even under the governments the most anxious to retain a highly privileged nobility around the throne as its surest support. In Austria, in Russia, in Denmark, in Sweden, in all the countries beyond the direct shock of the French revolutionary spirit, we see, without revolution, an avowed change in the governments, or principles of their social economy, a change and revolution in the state and spirit of society, a diminution of the social influence of the aristocratic element in it, as great as in France itself, or in Prussia. This transition-state of society over all the continent is not yet ripe for the historian ; but the traveller may give some knowledge of its various phases in different countries ; and the public mind, seldom wrong in its instinct for providing for its intellectual, any more than for its physical wants, instinctively feels that the events of the French Revolution, and all the results that issued from it, are but now in the act of completing themselves by their effects on society ; that chronicle, not history, is all that man, not gifted with prescience, can as yet venture to write concerning that great moral convulsion ; and it grasps at travels, tours, statistical reports, and observations on the social state of foreign lands, leaving the historian to sing his song to future generations, about events of which the consequences are still in the womb of time. To this craving of the public mind for information regarding the present social and political state of the people of the continent, not to

any merit of his own, the author ascribes the rapid sale of the first editions of this work and of his two preceding publications, "A Journal of a Residence in Norway" and "A Tour in Sweden." They are the first and second parts of the same attempt to give the English public just views of the political and social economy of the other European people. In justice to the public, which has placed confidence in his statements and conclusions concerning the social, moral, and political condition of the countries of which he has written, the author considers himself bound to vindicate his good faith, justice, and accuracy in each of the three volumes in which he has prosecuted his general plan, however high the quarters from which they have been attacked. He republishes, therefore, in this preface, his reply to a pamphlet of the representative of the king of Sweden at the British court, in which the fidelity of his statements and the justice of his conclusions are impugned. Kings and ambassadors are but ordinary men, and sometimes less than ordinary men, on the arena of literature. The reading public of this country cannot be hoodwinked by authority or official pretension; and the humblest writer has but to state his data, and conclusions fairly and fully, to demolish all attempts to impose upon or mislead its judgment. The author seizes this opportunity of doing so, because this Reply to his Excellency Count Biörnstierna's pamphlet develops his statements and conclusions on the subjects discussed in his volumes on Sweden and Norway with considerable detail; and because it appeared only in a periodical publication (the Monthly Chronicle) of very small circulation, and now out of print.