

preserved of positive documents regarding the first establishment of nations, confirm what has been announced by the natural monuments already mentioned.

The chronology of none of the western nations can be traced in a continuous line farther back than 3000 years. None of them afford us, previous to that period, nor even two or three centuries after, a series of facts connected with any degree of probability. The north of Europe possesses no authentic records which bear a remoter date than that of its conversion to Christianity. The history of Spain, of Gaul, and of England, commences only at the period when these countries were conquered by the Romans; that of northern Italy is, at the present day, almost unknown. The Greeks acknowledge that they did not possess the art of writing, until it was taught them by the Phenicians, fifteen or sixteen centuries before the Christian era; even for a long time after, their history is full of fables; and they do not assign a more remote date than 300 years farther back, to their uniting into distinct tribes. Of the history of Western Asia, we have only a few contradictory extracts, which do not, with any connection, give a greater antiquity than twenty-five centuries*; and even if we ad-

* The period of Cyrus, about 650 years before the Christian era.