

transmitted to us of positive proofs of the early establishment of nations, confirms what the natural records had declared.

The chronology of none of the nations of the west can be traced unbroken farther back than three thousand years. None of them can produce before this epoch, nor even for two or three centuries afterwards, a succession of events united by a semblance of truth. The north of Europe has no history previous to its conversion to Christianity; the history of Spain, of Gaul, of England, has no earlier date than the conquest by the Romans; that of northern Italy, previously to the foundation of Rome, is now almost unknown. The Greeks confess that they did not know the art of writing until they were taught by the Phœnicians, about thirty-three or thirty-four centuries ago. For a long period subsequently, their history is full of fables; and they are unable to go farther back than three centuries earlier, for the first traces of their union as a body. We have, in the history of western Asia, but a few contradictory extracts, which only reach, with very slight connexion, to twenty-five centuries back;(1) and, admitting the few historical details which refer to periods more remote, we can scarcely exceed the date of forty centuries.(2)

Herodotus, the earliest profane writer whose works are left to us, lived one thousand three hundred years ago.(3) The earliest historians before

(1) To Cyrus, about 650 years before Christ.

(2) To Nisus, about 2348 years before Christ, according to Ctesias and those who have followed him; but only to 1250, according to Volney, who follow Herodotus.

(3) Herodotus lived B. C. 440.