

mencement of his kings of Assyria, about 4000 years before the present time. (1)

This wretched state of historical knowledge is owing to the subjection of the people to an hereditary priesthood, who enforced a worship monstrous in its external form, and cruel in most of its precepts, and who alone had the privilege of writing, of preserving, and explaining the books. Any absurd tale, invented to give fame to a shrine of pilgrimage, legends calculated to inspire a deeper homage for their caste, was of more importance to them than all the facts of authentic history. With respect to the sciences, they might have cultivated astronomy, which gave them a reputation as astrologers; mechanics, which assisted them in elevating monuments, signs of their power, and the objects of the most superstitious veneration with the people; geometry, the basis of astronomy as well as of mechanics, and an important auxiliary to agriculture in those vast alluvial plains which could only be made salutary and fruitful by means of numerous canals; they might encourage the mechanical or chemical arts which nourish their commerce, and contributed to their luxury and the splendour of their temples; but they would look with dread on history, which would inform mankind of their mutual relations.

What we observe in India, we might expect to find in every country in which a priesthood, con-

that the constellations of the Indian sphere have also the names of Grecian personages; that we have Andromeda under the name of Antarmadia, Cepheus under that of Capiia, &c., we may be tempted with M. Wilfort, to draw a different conclusion. Unfortunately the records adduced by this writer have been doubted by the learned.

(1) Bentley, Mem. de Calcutta, v. 8. p. 226. ed. 8vo.—note.