

nations who were not in any degree in possession of other ; to whom the serenity of the sky, the necessities of the pastoral or agricultural life, and their superstitious ideas, would render the stars an object of general attention ; where colleges, or societies of the most respectable men among them, were charged with keeping a register of interesting phenomena, and transmitting their memory ; and where, from the hereditary nature of the profession, the children were brought up from the cradle in the knowledge of facts ascertained by their parents? Supposing that, among the numerous individuals of whom the cultivation of astronomy was the sole occupation, there should happen to be one or two possessed of extraordinary talents for geometry, all the knowledge acquired by these nations might be attained in a few centuries.

Since the time of the Chaldeans, real astronomy has only had two eras, that of the Alexandrian school, which lasted 400 years, and that of our own times, which has not existed so long. The learned period of the Arabians scarcely added any thing to it ; and the other ages have been mere blanks with regard to it. Three hundred years did not intervene between Copernicus and the author of the *Mécanique Céleste* ; and can it be believed that the Indians required thousands of years to arrive at their crude theories ?