

lized nations] the true principles of social order; the arts which conduce to the dignity and the happiness of mankind, and a rational and lasting system of morals and religion. Let it not be said, that they are incapable of improvement. Such an assertion can only suit those speculative philosophers who retire to their closets enveloped in a thick atmosphere of prejudices, which the strongest lights of truth cannot pervade. Natural History, which opens the door to so much precious knowledge concerning mankind, teaches us, that the physical differences between nations are but inconsiderable, and history informs us, that civilization has been constantly preceded by barbarity and rudeness. It teaches us, a mortifying truth, that nations may relapse into rudeness again; all their proud monuments crumbled into dust, and themselves, now savages, subjects of contemplation among civilized nations and philosophers. In the immense scheme of nature, which the feeble mind of man cannot fully comprehend, it may be our lot to fall into rudeness once more. There are good reasons for conjecturing, that the ancestors of many of the savage tribes of America are the descendants of nations who had attained to a much higher degree of polish than themselves. My inquiries, at least, seem to render it certain, that the Americans are not, as some writers have supposed, specifically different from the Persians, and other improved nations of Asia. The infe-