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INTRODUCTION.

If we take the trouble to consult the discoveries of ancient and modern navigators, and the domestic history, or tradition, of the most enlightened nations which have ever existed in the world, we shall be mortified to find them representing MAN as a *savage*; naked both in mind and body, and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and of every other qualification which renders life desirable, and civilized society a scene of happiness fit for the enjoyment of the human species. But history has not left us in this abject and melancholy condition; and if we once more consult her pages, our pride will rise with our satisfaction at the discovery, that, at various stages in the progress of human affairs, man has gradually arisen from his primitive ignorance and barbarity, and soared to a height in knowledge and in wisdom at once astonishing to himself, and derogatory to the pretensions of every other living animal. He has placed the beasts of the field in subjection to his command as a subordinate ally in his labours—he has fertilized the earth that it might administer to his comforts—he has traversed the ocean to obtain the elegancies, as well as a better knowledge of the general habits of life—and he has measured the span of the Heavens to become more familiar with the incomprehensible superstructure of the Universe, and the still more inconceivable power of its Almighty Architect. The progress of man in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties has been no less distinguished and splendid. He has traced the never-failing resources of the one and the intricate but substantial powers of the