

tain that the most ignorant nations have ever been the most superstitious; and the most immoral. Though Savages may possess many virtues; yet these are to be attributed more to their poverty, than to their ignorance. When plentifully supplied with the necessaries and pleasures of life, they have generally given themselves up to odious vices, and brutal sensuality. Experience puts it beyond a doubt that knowledge is favourable to religious sentiments, and to moral impressions.

Persons who possess not the art of reading, but who are yet instructed by their teachers in the doctrines of Religion, are certainly far superior to those who enjoy not even this advantage. Still, however, the knowledge of such persons is far inferior to that which they might attain, if, in addition to this instruction, they possessed also the sagacity and reflexion produced by the habit of reading. I speak here of the Christian Religion in general, without regard to any of the particular classes and parties that have been introduced among its professors. And do not, then, all Christian, Greeks, Catholics, Protestants, and all others, with the exception of a few Mystics, admit that the doctrines of their Religion are addressed to the understandings of men? Are not all the arguments which the Gospel offers, either for the encouragement of virtue, the destruction of sin, or the consolation of the afflicted, addressed to our reason? And does it not follow, that, like all other sound arguments, they must be weighed by judgment, before they can influence our conduct; and that they must be more effectual, in proportion to the extent in which they are understood, and in proportion to the conviction which we have of their truth?

It is admitted that the most illiterate may, by the pains and care of their instructors, acquire some general knowledge of the outline of moral duty. But, it is evident, that the task of instruction must, in this case, be an exceedingly difficult one. And, after all the pains which it is possible to take, persons so rude and illiterate, generally remain liable to a variety of errors from which a very slight expansion of the reasoning faculty would be sufficient to set them free. They have always been disposed to rest in the external forms of Religion, and to consider the observance of its rites as an atonement for the neglect of moral duty. They talk about sublime doctrines and mysteries; they wonder and are astonished, without ever considering the intimate connexion which these subjects possess with the conduct of human life. Besides, as has been observed by QUINTILIAN, the impressions which are made through the medium of the ears, are evanescent and transitory; those which pass through the eyes, are incomparably more permanent.—Were there no other method of teaching Religion and Morals, than oral instruction; we should then be obliged to confine ourselves to this; and should still have reason to be thankful to Providence for the possession of it. But, when, in addition to this, another and more effectual method is in our hands; who will justify our conduct, if we confine ourselves to the use of an inferior mode of instruction, and entirely neglect that which we know to be better calculated for producing the effect intended? By what arguments can we extenuate our neglect of so im-