

READER—

THIS volume consists of entire Narratives; that is to say, I have given the originals without the slightest abridgment; nor have I taken any liberties with the language of any of them, which would in the remotest degree change the sense of a single passage, and the instances are few in which I have ventured to correct peculiarities of expression; yet I designed that, with regard to grammatical accuracy, there should be as few faults as the nature of such a performance would allow. All expressions of an antiquated date are not attempted to be changed. Some redundancies have been dropped, which could only have been retained at the expense of perspicuity.

I am not unaware that there may be persons who will doubt of the propriety of laying before all classes of the community a work which records so much that is shocking to humanity; but the fashion of studying the book of Nature has now long obtained, and pervades all classes. I have done no more than to exhibit a page of it in this collection. To observe man in his uncivilized or natural state offers an approach to a knowledge of his natural history, without which it is hardly obtained.

We find volumes upon volumes on the manners and customs of the Indians, many of the writers of which would have us believe they have exhausted the subject, and consequently we need inquire no further; but whoever has travelled among distant tribes, or read the accounts of intelligent travellers, do not require to be told that the most endless variety exists, and that the manners and customs of uncultivated nations are no more stationary, nor so much so, as are those of a civilized people. The current of time changes all things. But we have elsewhere observed* that similar necessities, although in different nations, have produced similar customs; such as will stand through ages with very little, if any, variation. Neither is it strange that similar articulations should be found in languages having no other affinity, because imitations of natural sounds must everywhere be the same. Hence it follows that customs are as various as the face of nature itself.

A lecturer on the manners and customs of certain tribes of Indians may assure us that no others observe certain barbarous rites, and that, as they by some sudden mortality have become extinct, the knowledge of those rites is known to none others save himself, and that therefore he is the

*Book of the Indians, Book i., p. 10.