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THE steady progress which has been made in the study of Archaeology during the last few years, and the increasing interest which the subject is now generally exciting, justify the feeling of congratulation with which the Committee regard the commencement of the seventh volume of the transactions of the Institute. Under such encouraging auspices the hope may now fairly be indulged that a healthful stimulus in a right direction has been given, of which the effects will be lasting, and from which the most important results may confidently be expected. The numerous societies established of late years all over the kingdom, for the express purpose of advancing these objects, are a proof of the value that is now being attributed to such inquiries, while the spirit in which they are conducted tends to elevate antiquarian studies far above the character which they formerly had of mere learned but unprofitable trifling. Though there always have been a few unobtrusive, painstaking, and devoted students who have dedicated themselves to the interesting work of preserving, and, so far as their opportunities enabled them, illustrating the remains of the past; yet, unrecognised and unhonoured by the world at large, their only reward has too often been found in the gratification that has attended the pursuit: and such lights as they were able to throw upon obscure and curious points of antiquarian interest glimmered but feebly and partially in the vast gloom of ignorance and apathy which surrounded them. The principles that should direct this study, and

which are now beginning to be so well established that Archaeology may almost lay claim to the rank of a science, were then scarcely recognised even by the most earnest of its followers ; and to others, therefore, a devotion to Archaeology seemed but a dreamy and idle speculation. Thus, till within a comparatively few years, the labours of the antiquary were regarded with a feeling of disrespect and disparagement ; and were sneered at, if not entirely ignored. How truly this was the case is shown by one of our most distinguished scholars and critics who thus expressed himself, and endeavoured to vindicate the honour of his calling, in the year 1826 :—"Antiquarian researches," he writes, "are a frequent subject of ridicule to pretended wits, ignorant of their nature and object. It is not here the place to show the utility of Archaeology ; it is sufficiently known, and professors have been appointed to teach it in almost every University on the continent. As Addison, a great admirer of antiquity has justly observed, 'mankind is too apt to think that every thing which is laughed at with any mixture of wit, is ridiculous in itself' : but ridicule is not the test of truth, and when directed against objects that are great and respectable, is ultimately injurious to those only, who, from a want of solid argument, have recourse to such means." (Millingen, *Preface to ancient Inedited Monuments.*)

Something of this general feeling may have arisen, among other causes, from the vagueness of speculation often indulged in by collectors of objects of antiquity : something also from the impression some *virtuosi* have caused to be felt that the sole interest of Archaeology consists in accumulating scraps of antiquity—without selection, order, or application. But he would take a very contracted view of the interests and purpose of antiquarian pursuits, who would confine, as many have done, the object of the antiquary to the mere possession of "curiosities" : the accumulation of mere relics, however ancient, or however quaint. It is not out of place to allude to this, because it has often been made one of the grounds of reflection against the profession. The collector who is totally uninformed respecting the history of his possessions, or whose

sole satisfaction is in acquiring, ranks indeed but little higher, intellectually, than the cabinet in which his treasure is secured. He but holds it in charge, as it were, for the instruction of those who are able to appreciate it, and who alone can give it its real value. Gratification of a certain kind may, it is true, be derived from the contemplation of a memorial of bygone times, in the associations that so busily crowd the fancy as it endeavours to penetrate into the obscure Past, and to identify itself in imaginary existence with the scenes and actors of a distant age. But this, if it goes no further than dwelling on visionary pictures, however brightly coloured, is but unreal and unprofitable dreaming. The pursuits of the antiquary have higher objects than only to invite or please poetical fancy, bright and welcome as is the sunshine it throws over our ordinary worldly occupations. To give character and purpose to our studies, in whatever direction they may lie, to fulfil in fact that vocation to which all are called, and for which undoubtedly their different or various talents have been given them, it is essential to make them contribute to some greater end than mere personal and present gratification. Generally speaking, antiquaries are not open, in these days, to the imputation of withholding information, or concealing from the curious and worthy inquirer any objects they may possess, of which the publication or examination can answer a useful purpose. Considering the value of their collections and the difficulty and expense which often has attended their acquisition, it may most truly be affirmed that they have generally manifested a most liberal desire to make them known, and instrumental in forwarding the great objects which antiquarian pursuits are intended and are so peculiarly calculated to advance.

It becomes those, then, who are really interested in what are the legitimate objects of Archaeology, to take care that so truly an important subject of intellectual study should be properly understood; to show that the establishment of so many actively employed societies, comprising among their members persons of learning, intelligence, and influence, is a guarantee to the public that the pursuit is not one of mere

dilettanteism without definite objects ; and that such institutions are not organised merely for the purpose of collecting heterogeneous, and, it must in truth be said, not always unquestionable remains of antiquity : a better class, in short, of curiosity shops. Those who have hitherto paid no attention to antiquarian pursuits, or may have treated with contempt what appeared to them the useless or speculative labours of the antiquary, may, it is hoped, be taught that his object is, in its way, of as high a reach as that of others who are allowed to be worthy labourers in the field of history. It is true that his way may occasionally lie along the byepaths and lanes, but here often some of the fairest flowers are to be found ; and though the facts he may collect may be minute, and apparently of little moment to the common observer, yet his careful researches may, by clearing up doubts upon points of date, by showing how to select or reject questionable documents, by detecting forgeries, by decyphering and illustrating inscriptions, or, again, by tracing through brasses and other monumental remains a lost link in a pedigree, not only throw much light on obscure points of history, but may assist the jurist in dealing with most important social interests. With these views, it is obvious no object can be considered trifling which can in any degree contribute to establish a fact, to expose error, or to open a new path of useful speculation. The form of a letter, the shape of a piece of armour, even the character of an ornament, whether occurring in a manuscript or on a fragment of sculpture, may, as they frequently have done, determine questions which but for such evidence might never be satisfactorily disposed of. In such matters, among numerous other particulars which might easily be adduced, the intelligent antiquary is not only the careful preserver of curious objects and facts, but he may also be exercising a calling of honourable usefulness. He feels that his pursuit—at first, perhaps, taken up for amusement—may be made to serve the cause of truth ; and this will incite him to claim for it the respect and consideration of the intelligent and the unprejudiced.

It is scarcely necessary here to enlarge upon what has

already been hinted at, namely, the high gratification that real antiquaries derive from their pursuit as an occupation. All who have been engaged in them, even for a short time, can bear witness to the fascination of such studies. There is probably scarcely any occupation that takes possession so fully of its votaries as Archaeology, combining, as it is capable of doing, the most pleasing amusement with great intellectual exercise ; extending, where any subject of deep interest is under examination, into regions of varied, and, frequently, most curious learning. This in itself is sufficient to give a great degree of attractiveness to the occupation of the antiquary ; but, beyond this, it is not claiming too much for it to assert that a moral influence of no slight amount is exercised by Archaeological inquiry. In the more recently formed societies, the collection and examination of objects of Mediaeval Art connected with *national* and *local* history are especially looked to ; and already a great fund of valuable information on these subjects has been obtained. One result of this is indisputable. From our more correct acquaintance with the habits of our ancestors, we surely become more closely linked with the interests of our own descent. In the various phases of our civilisation ; in the warlike and energetic character of our earlier races ; in the deep, devotional feelings which characterised the age of Church influence, so strikingly exhibited in the sublime ecclesiastical edifices that adorn our country, and in the simple and affecting monuments which are preserved in them ; in the combination of the religious and warlike character in the Crusaders ; in the stern valour, and impatience under tyranny, of the brave Barons who wrung from their sovereign the Magna Charta of our liberty ; or, in the chivalrous exploits which have tinged, as it were, with the bright colours of romance the busy times of our Edwards and early Henrys, we dwell with fond remembrance upon the traces of those noble spirits whose deeds have illustrated our history. Though these are but a few of the bright and stirring pictures suggested by this branch of our subject, this mere cursory glance at the wide field of national historical interest that is spread out

before us, is sufficient to point out some of the numerous exciting associations that may be awakened by antiquarian researches. From the knowledge thus acquired, and the reflections to which it naturally gives rise, our feelings of patriotism cannot but be strengthened, and we shall be led to cherish, with increased fervour, those sentiments of national attachment which, while they fill us with an honourable pride that we can claim to belong to a race distinguished in the history of nations, may also tend to incite and keep alive in us a noble emulation, not only not to dishonour those from whom we are descended, but even to imitate, so far as it may be in our power, the qualities which have, in the course of ages, contributed to stamp its character upon the men and upon the institutions of our country. Much more might be added upon the important inquiries to which a profound acquaintance with Archaeology must necessarily lead its professors, if the study, treated as a branch of inductive science, be carried out to the extent of which it is capable. But neither our space nor the occasion will admit of our entering upon the more philosophical speculations to which antiquarian inquiries may and must give rise, though the time may come when these also will receive a fuller share of consideration. It needs only to be suggested that the accumulation of those facts which the accomplished antiquary alone can properly verify, and which, by his valuable assistance, bring us acquainted in detail and by tangible proof, as it were, with the usages of particular eras, must necessarily lead, if rightly considered, to a more enlarged field of intellectual exercise. The study of the habits which have belonged to different ages of social life, will induce the consideration of the idiosyncrasy of race, and in this the philosopher and the antiquary will be usefully combined. Archaeology will then assume a still more dignified station among the objects of mind, and will justly be recognised as a necessary and most valuable auxiliary in the elucidation of the interesting speculations that are now being developed in connection with ethnological inquiries.

Warmed with these sincere feelings of attachment and respect towards the objects and study of Archaeology, the

Committee venture to hope that the body of curious and valuable information they may be enabled to lay before their readers in the present volume, will be received with favour and encouragement. It will be a proud reward if the exertions of the Institute to forward the good work may tend to enlist others who have not yet entered upon the important and instructive study of antiquity, to join in advancing the interests of science ; and, having been imbued with an intelligent appreciation of the real value of all ancient vestiges, to co-operate cordially with their brethren in their 'labour of love,' and especially in one of the most important objects they have at heart, the vigilant conservation of our National Monuments.

R. W. (JUN.)