

The Archaeological Journal.

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IN commencing a new year, and, with it, the sixth volume of their Journal, the Central Committee of the Archaeological Institute feel that they may justly congratulate their constituents on the increased, and steadily increasing, prosperity of the Institute itself, not less than on the great advance which has taken place in Scientific Archaeology. Still more do they feel justified in looking forward with confidence to a more extended sphere of usefulness and a more energetic action. They have the cheering conviction that sound ideas are becoming daily more widely disseminated, and a clearer insight attained, into the genuine aims and necessary limits of Archaeological study: and they can congratulate themselves and their fellow-labourers in this field on having been brought into a nearer communion with those who in every part of the Continent of Europe, have already established an efficient organisation for similar purposes. On every side there is evidence of a generous and earnest co-operation among those who have devoted themselves to special pursuits; and not only does this tend of itself to widen the general basis, but it supplies the individual thinker with an ever-widening foundation for his own special study. Doubtless our condition is very different now from what it was, when a few amiable and eccentric men first set about "collecting curiosities."

We shall not undervalue these pioneers on our track, or criticise their method. We owe to them, if nothing more, at least this service, that they handed on the torch from man to man—dim perhaps and faintly glimmering, yet never

totally extinguished. They have delivered it to us : but, as we are the inheritors of the past, so are we, most assuredly, called upon to use our inheritance in a wise and generous manner. And most of all it is incumbent upon us clearly to comprehend the nature of our mission and the limits of our field. We are but collectors, even as our predecessors were ; but we are collectors with a definite purpose, and in a definite method. It is our business to rescue from neglect and ruin the fragmentary remains which tell of the past, but, unlike them, we group these facts by a system, class them as it were in genera and families, and by a stern induction wring from them a portion at least of the secrets which lie hid within the mists of ages. And to this comprehensive method we owe it that there can be nothing exclusive in our proceeding : it is enough for the Archaeologist that any one fact should be a fact of the past ; and it is enough for science that such one fact should be capable of arrangement and comparison with any one similar fact, or any number of them. From that moment it becomes lawful prize of the Archaeologist. In his estimation an old song is as valuable as an arch Pointed or Round. An Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Early English spell, prayer, law, legend, nay, even word, has its profound meaning : so has a mullion, a corbel, a clerestory, a whole cathedral. So has a cabinet of medals, a pot, a pan, a battle-axe, or a woman's jewel, if properly appreciated, without exaggeration, and above all, without exclusiveness. But in one sense only is their value the same,—as different letters of the alphabet by which we spell the history of the land : the history of the land itself only a letter of the alphabet by which we spell the history of man : the history of man itself only a portion of that larger alphabet by which we spell the history of God's dealings with the world.

It is necessary—and it is full time,—that a large view should be taken of these questions, and not a narrow one : if ever Archaeological pursuits come to be considered as an end in themselves, and not as a means to an end, they dwindle down at once into laborious trifling, which has at all times received the ridicule it merited. According to the import-

ance of the end itself, is the importance of these means to it: and Archaeology,—Architecture, the study of ornaments, clothing, weapons, and utensils, inscriptions, funeral monuments, nay, even Philology and Law itself—if not made subservient to a higher purpose, are but trifles to pipe trifiers together: the skill of their professors may be matter for our wonder; but only of such wonder as we should have manifested at him who threw peas unerringly through the eye of a needle. The higher purpose at which we ought to strive is the Record of human development in the special terms of national development—the History of Man imaged in the History of one collection of Men.

The Committee believe that they are tending to this result in inviting the active co-operation and systematic communion of all persons devoted to Archaeological inquiries, and of societies now established in every part of England for special purposes more or less closely allied to Archaeology. They cannot believe it possible to enlarge their basis too much: and while they shrink from wedding themselves too exclusively to any one branch of the science, they feel that they are best subserving the interests of all.

J. M. K.