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WITHIN no very distant period the study of antiquities has passed, in popular esteem, from contempt to comparative honour. That this change should have occurred in an age by no means remarkable either for its reverence for the past, or its sensibility to impressions of romance; an age distinguished, in common phrase, as preeminently "practical" and "utilitarian," furnishes some proof of an improvement in the method in which the study itself has been pursued. Whilst the remains of former times were collected and treasured rather for their own sake, than for the illustration they afforded to history, social manners, or art, the antiquary was considered a worshipper of what was essentially unreal, and had therefore little claim for sympathy or support from others. His researches have risen in estimation, as they have been animated by a more comprehensive spirit, and directed to a more instructive end: whilst the very effort which has elevated Archaeology to the dignity of a science, has at the same time, by exhibiting the past in a more lively relationship with the present, given to the study more general interest.

An honourable position has thus been gained. To maintain it, the student of antiquities must struggle, — not against the "spirit of the age," still less against rival sciences,—but against that which can alone permanently degrade any science, an unphilosophic or sterile system. The credit of Archaeology must ultimately depend upon the value of its results. Nothing will more tend to keep up its efficiency, than an occasional, even a periodical, balancing of its accounts, and estimate of its progress. In all pursuits such reviews are of service; but they are peculiarly important in a study where the attention is apt to be distracted by the

multiplicity, as well as the individual interest, of details. In the sciences which are conversant with necessary matter, and employ demonstrative reasoning, success or failure, progress or decline, are immediately recognised ; for the sum of problems solved, or laws discovered, determines the amount of gain. But in those which deal only with what is contingent, the estimate is more difficult ; for we have first to pronounce upon the proof of facts admitting no higher evidence than probability, and then to determine the value of the truths established by reference to the general condition of the science.

In the instance of Archaeology, it will hardly be possible to arrive at a correct judgment of its state and progress, without some attempt to distinguish and classify the materials with which it has to deal, and the methods of treatment properly applicable to each. A principle of classification, available *in limine*, is suggested by the motive from which the study is pursued. This may be, firstly, the discovery of evidence, primary or collateral, in proof of what is emphatically termed "History," that is, the record of ancient events directly affecting the public relations and interests of nations, regarded as communities. Archaeology, in this point of view, acts simply as the purveyor to another, though kindred, science ; and its present efficiency must be tested by the value of the evidence applicable for this purpose which it is daily contributing. Such value will depend, like that of all other evidence, upon the proportionate importance of the events thereby proved, upon the conclusiveness of the proof, and especially upon the absence of other testimony ; from which last consideration it incidentally results, that the most profitable field for researches founded on this motive will be the *darkest*.

A second motive may be the illustration of personal life amongst our ancestors, in points of which national History takes no account, as lying, in a manner, off its highway. Archaeology here no longer holds a merely ancillary position, but itself rises to the level of History, as it furnishes the only memorial of what the great masses of mankind individually were, and did, and thought, and felt, in former ages ; questions more essential to the true biography of the human race, than the locality of a battle-field, the legitimacy of a dynasty, or the constitution of a senate : for,

> ——— "small, of all the ills that men endure,
> The part which laws or kings can cause or cure ;"

whilst infinite, because ever present, is the influence of those unregarded companions of daily life, labour and recreation, household cares and joys, bodily wants and comforts, objects for the affections, and exercise for the mind. In this department of Archaeology it can no longer be assumed that the obscurest periods are most worthy of investigation. Those, on the contrary, should be preferred which are richest in the materials intrinsically deserving of study; that is, in the visible development of the human intellect, the display of personal character, the creative activity of the arts, the variety of the social relations, and the analogies or contrasts which these may present to life amongst ourselves. In proportion to the light which they may throw upon such subjects of inquiry, will be the scientific value of those relics of the past which we may collect or preserve. In proportion to the use that is made of them by comparison, induction, generalization, by unfolding their history, interpreting their language, and applying their testimony to the illustration of past forms of human life, will be the credit which the archaeologist may claim for intelligence and progress.

Thirdly, the object of research may be limited to procuring materials from the remains of former times for the improvement of our own Arts and Manufactures. In those branches of ideal or ornamental design which are known distinctively as the "Fine Arts," the best models are to be found in the Past; not from any inherent superiority in the genius or taste of preceding ages, but simply because in that which is not in its nature progressive, but the independent offspring of individual intellects, the competition of all Time has naturally vanquished the efforts of a single generation. To discover, select, and preserve such models, and render them available for æsthetic teaching, is the honourable tribute of Archaeology to Art. In the purely Mechanical Arts, on the other hand, where success is the result of experiment, guided by knowledge which is ever accumulating, we have no longer to seek the best models amongst the works of our ancestors. Still, even here, advantage may result from an acquaintance with the earlier modes of practice adopted in such Arts: some methods will perhaps be found to have been disused from negligence rather than knowledge, whilst others will prove suggestive in their very imperfections; and all will be pregnant with that instruction which belongs to the history

of difficulty subdued by perseverance. The most profitable remains for the study of the artist or manufacturer will of course be the productions of those periods and countries which have most affinity, in their forms of civilization and social condition, with our own ; a consideration which might have appeared too obvious for mention, had we not seen it so often practically ignored.

From this rapid survey of the domain of Archaeology, let us turn to its actual condition, as it presents itself in each of these several points of view.

First, in its Historical application. It is seldom that the recovery of the actual vouchers of History from the *debris* of ages can be the reward of systematic research. The unconscious evidence of war, or of flight,—the heaped bones, or deposited treasure,—even, in many instances, the purposed monumental record,—the Chronicle of Paros, or the Stone of Rosetta,—are the discoveries of chance. We owe, perhaps, more original materials to the rude labours of agriculture and modern engineering, than to all the learning and skill of Academies and Institutes. Nevertheless, our own day has witnessed one of the richest acquisitions of monumental evidence which sagacious and persevering antiquarian research has ever contributed to History. The excavations lately made, and still making, in the neighbourhood of Nineveh, have raised from the silence of the tomb the eloquent memorials of events once affecting the condition of millions of mankind. Incidentally, these discoveries have reflected light on other distinct sciences : the naturalist views in the Assyrian monuments the record of animals now wholly, or partially, extinct : and the architect recognizes his most familiar forms, the Ionic volute, the *guilloche* ornament, the arched vault, employed long before the supposed inventions of Greece and Rome. But the inscriptions thus obtained present us with a fresh library of historical literature, still indeed but imperfectly decyphered, yet now in course of interpretation, which, from its novelty, extent, and still undetermined influence, may be said to constitute Nineveh the California of Archaeology.

In considering, secondly, that department of the Science which is devoted to the illustration of the manners, arts, and personal life of our ancestors, two occurrences of the past year must be specially mentioned, as subjects of congratulation. The one is the act of the Society of Antiquaries of

Scotland, in transferring to the Crown for public use their valuable collection of antiquities at Edinburgh. The other is the institution, in the British Museum, of a separate Section, under distinct superintendence, for British and Mediæval Antiquities. The public recognition of the claims of a subject so peculiarly national in its characteristics and bearings, yet so long unaccountably neglected, and the organization of a central agency for its cultivation, may assist in promoting a more scientific method of research than it has as yet received from the undisciplined aid of its irregular votaries. In respect to system, classical Archaeology has been hitherto much in advance. The genius of Greek and Roman literature has exercised a commanding supremacy over the study even of the unwritten monuments of Greece and Rome, and imparted to the secondary science the breadth, simplicity, and precision, which characterize the principal. Our own country has not been wanting in achievements in this field. It may be permitted to refer to the Dictionaries edited by Dr. Smith, as models of analytical method, from which the student of our national antiquities might well borrow a suggestion. The first requisite at present is a more exact classification of the objects which are the foundation of our inquiries, with reference to their original localities, their age, use, and artistic fabric ; and this will of itself lead to the supply of the second desideratum, a more fixed and definite terminology. In the primæval period, especially, Archaeology has hitherto effected but little of discovery. It is but recently that the basis of a chronological classification has been recognized in the material of the earliest remains, whether stone, bronze, or iron. The antiquities of the Danish people, both in Denmark and elsewhere, have lately received much light from the researches of M. Worsaae : let us hope that an Island, which, together with the monuments of the Viking, is rich in the remains of three other independent races, will not fail to carry into further regions the investigation thus commenced.

In the remaining division of Archaeological inquiry, which is directed primarily to the interests of Art and Manufacture, a distinction must be noticed between the Fine, or Ornamental, and the Mechanical Arts. In the former, especially in Architecture, both classical and mediæval, the monuments of ancient skill have received, in England and abroad, ample

illustration from literature and engraving. The Mechanical, or purely useful Arts, on the other hand, seem to have obtained less favour with antiquarian students. Yet to this age and country few exhibitions could be more appropriate than a collection of the various productions of useful manufacture, and (if possible) of any machinery employed in their fabrication, each deduced from their infancy, and arranged chronologically, so as to elucidate not merely the progress of mechanical science, but the growing wants of civilization.

Even to the Fine Arts Archaeology can scarcely be said to have fully discharged its duty, whilst the preservation of so many of their noblest monuments is at least not enforced as a public obligation. Such a charge was specially imposed on the *Comité des Arts et des Monuments*, established in France by M. Guizot: and in a great and civilized community, proud of its history, and jealous of its rights, some provision for protecting the trophies of ancestral genius from the injuries of time and change seems no unreasonable demand for Archaeology to make on the State.

One further claim which Art has long urged upon us, but which still remains unfulfilled, can here be barely glanced at; the institution of a Museum for reduced models of the noblest edifices of antiquity, with plaster casts of their finer and minuter details, and also for a collection of casts from the best productions of ancient sculpture, a collection which would concentrate ampler materials for artistic study than any single gallery of original works, either here or on the continent.

To fulfil all the functions that have here been suggested, is more than can be expected of any man or body of men. But it is the prerogative, and the duty, of a Society with such an organization as the Archaeological Institute, to collect from the remotest sources the demands of science, and holding, as it were, from time to time, its commissions of *Oyer and Terminer*, to judge at least such claims as it is unable to discharge, and note such deficiencies as it cannot supply. Let it endeavour to centralize the operations of scattered fellow-workers: in some it may aid by its machinery, in others influence by its authority; in all it may encourage, advise, report; but it must never be overlooked, that it is by the energy of individuals that all real success is gained.

EDM. OLDFIELD.