ANTIQUARIAN RESEARCHES.

"A plague," says Time to Thomas Hearne,
"Whatever I forget you learn."

OUR poetical contributor has taken a view of the Antiquary under the idea of what Doctor Johnson calls "Curiosity in Excess," where straws and trifles occupy that time which might be more seriously or advantageously employed. But this spirit of imagination may be pardoned in a stranger to the pleasures of virtu, when one of its most ardent votaries indulged in the ridicule of a profession he both followed and admired. But Grose, while caricaturing pretensions to connoisseurship, did not consider that a handle might be made of this satire to draw down the contempt of some, ignorant of the pleasure and advantage of antiquarian research; in which there is more than is dreamt of, in the philosophy of many, who won-

der that men should be found to puzzle themselves about the *past*, when there is so much to be done with the present.*

* Under the head MISCELLANEA CRITICA in Blackwood's Magazine for this month (September, 1826), is an article which prominently introduces the subject we are now attempting to illustrate, and from which we beg to be allowed to glean a few sentences. It thus begins:—"One use of Poetry is to nurse in us the feeling of the Beautiful. Another, among many others, to cherish, or produce, *the love of* ANTIQUITY." After shewing how "essentially poetical" are the manners and transactions of past ages, and what a high-wrought interest the Poet feels in the "remembrance of long-buried generations of our kind," the writer thus proceeds:—

"If there be in the Past, as such, the natural aptitude here supposed for affecting the Imagination, the *affection* will be enhanced by intercourse with *that Art*, which not only especially awakens this Faculty,—but greatly delights to lay open, and draw forth, these particular sources of its pleasure." And how this is effected, we learn from the following sensible observations:—"In the extension of our sympathy with human kind, taking in that portion which may least require it, indeed, the dead—but, further, those living, in whom the old times imaged, live yet:—In the wider field put under the dominion of thought; since that which we learn to love we then first understand:—In the solemnity added to our meditations on man's nature:—In loftier, calmer, juster views of human affairs:—In increased love of our country, itself ancient:—Lastly—among a high-cultivated people a consideration of no slight importance—In the ampler materials placed under the hand of those inventive, beautiful

The labours of the Antiquary serve to trace things up to their source,—to throw light upon the old for the improvement of the new,—to show the advance in some, and the failure of others towards that perfection, which is the ultimate aim of art, science, and literature.

There is, besides what belongs to the useful and important in antiquarian researches, an innocent pleasure and a harmless gratification, that per-

Arts, which are much of the brightness, and give much of the happiness, of distinguished civilization:—if it may not seem too much arguing in a circle, to say that Poetry is useful, by enlarging *its own* powers.—*What* is this LOVE OF ANTIQUITY? Not the coldly-curious taste, sometimes seen, of research into parts of knowledge from most minds hid by rareness, or separated by want of evident, common, compelling interest,—but a *feeling* placed half in imagination, half in our social nature, by which we accept our union of brotherhood with our kind, take concern in them, most distantly divided from us by time, and confess a title to affect us, in their MEMORY, by whatever shapes of matter it may be borne.

"Men, for the most part, love the Present. The joy given them in the consciousness of their living being, is of the hour, the moment: which it fills with animating, sparkling, fires. But the urn of the Past they can believe to contain only extinct and cold ashes,—misjudging,—nor aware how 'even in our ashes live their wonted fires.'"

haps more exclusively belong to the collector of antiquities than to most other pursuits.

By the aid of his treasures, he can call up past ages, and as it were make them refund the riches they had secreted. His minerals, his fossils, and his gems, discover in part the organization of the material world; his coins and medals connect many links in the chain of history that would otherwise be lost.* His ambition raises no armies to disturb the peace or destroy the happiness of mankind; his triumphs are not sprinkled with blood, nor is his path to fame washed with the tears of the widow or the orphan: a more perfect tome, a more rare example of virtu than has yet been acquired fills him with delight; the flame of his ambition is fed on the hopes of obtaining some antique lamp or other curiosity; and while the thoughts of the greater part of mankind are bent

* In these relics of antiquity he can contemplate the features of an Antoninus, a M. Aurelius, or other of the ancient worthies, in a style of execution whose stamp is a guarantee for their fidelity.

on the pursuit of honours or wealth, his may be more quietly engaged in admiring the beauties of an Etruscan vase, or commenting on the form and use of a lachrymatory :

" Behold I have put thy tears in my bottle."

Here a passage of scripture is explained,—there a mine of inquiry is sprung, and the ore of the intelligent and useful revealed.

Antiquarian researches are like vessels of discovery,—sometimes fraught with the marvellous, at others laden with cargoes of the richest materials, the produce of every clime and of every shore ; or if these fail, there is matter at hand which, though not of so costly a quality, may by an alchymy (well known to the initiated) be converted into a substance more valuable than intrinsically belonged to it. Such are the legendary tales of the olden time, with their quaint language or grotesque ornaments; beneath whose homely features and rude address are often concealed some important lesson, some stroke of satire or shrewd research; where,

if the laugh is raised, it is at the expense of vice or folly; or if the bells are gingled, it is for the purpose of obtaining attention to some moral instruction.

Examples of this kind might be multiplied far beyond the limits of this brief notice, which was only intended to bring into view those capabilities (as Brown would call them) which the study of virtu is calculated to exhibit.

It is true, conjecture and fancy will mix themselves up with the solid materials, or in some instances become substitutes for the true meaning, but then they are often so ingenious and inventive, that the resemblance is readily admitted, as in the case of the Scotch novels, where history and fiction unite so imperceptibly as not easily to be discovered, and what may be lost by the absence of the one is gained by the skill and the amusement found in the other.

Our design goes simply to show that the Antiquary may be surprised by Death in the midst of

his treasured relics; and that, while recording the wonders of antiquity, a monumental record may be preparing for himself. Not that it would have been impossible to introduce Death as a consequence of antiquarian researches. He might inoculate himself with the canker by licking a coin, or be poisoned in tasting the liquors used in the preserving of certain bodies; he might die of chagrin, when missing the purchase of a unique or a non-de-descript. There are other instances in which, like Jonathan Oldbuck, the Antiquary's temper and even frame might receive a shock, when told that his antique of 400 years had by some awkward discovery been deprived of an 0. But Antiquaries do not die of chagrin,—whether there is any "cause in nature," or in the study of virtu, that fortifies the heart and keeps the brain cool, in the disappointed views, the accidents, or mistakes that attend these pursuits, is not perhaps known or has not become an object of inquiry. True it is, there are men of such phlegm, or of such philosophy, as to bear up against mortifications that would annihilate persons of more morbid sensibilities; nor are there wanting instances in which the most fatal

effects have followed the mortification of a plan, destroyed either by design or by accident. Madame Sevigné relates a melancholy instance of this keen and desperate sensibility, as it may be called, where the *maitre-d'hôte* of a French nobleman fell upon his sword and expired, because the *roti* was ill served or ill cooked.† After all, may it not be the number and variety of his resources which give to the Antiquary's mind a nerve, an elasticity, that he shall recover you a blow or a fall by which another man shall be stunned or killed outright. For had it been possible for an Antiquary to have died of chagrin, it must have occurred in the case below cited,* which we have

* Archæological Anecdote, 1789.

"We hear, that a valuable morsel of antiquity, containing a Saxon inscription, commemorative of particulars attending the death of *Hardyknute*, has been discovered among the foundations of his Palace in Kennington Lane. This memorial is in Saxon characters, sculptured on white marble, which, though discoloured by damps, is still in high and excellent preservation.

"The curiosity before us, but for an accident, might have returned to its former obscurity. An able and intelligent draughtsman luckily saw it in a window at a cutler's shop on the Surrey side of Blackfriars Bridge. It was subsequently

† This is a little mistaken, the roti was forgotten at two or three tables, at a grand entertainment given at Chantilli, by the Prince de Conde to Louis 15th.

copied from the European Magazine for March, 1790, where a learned professor is described as

examined and authenticated by the learned Director of the Antiquary Society; and by him, or his order, was copied and sent (no beautiful detrition, conciliating freckle, or picturesque fissure, omitted) to the Reverend and very acute Mr. SAMUEL PEGGE. He expeditiously furnished an ample comment upon it, which was lately read, to the general improvement of its auditors, in Somerset Place, when formal thanks were unanimously voted for so erudite a communication. Such, indeed, was the effect of this discourse, that the personages present at its recital (as Lydgate observes of the fortunate Trojans who beheld the carbuncle that illuminated the Hall of King Priamus)

'—— mervayled ech one,
Soche lyghte ysprang out of thylk stone.'

"The inscription aforesaid is expressed with that simple but majestic brevity which marks the performances of ancient times. It states, in unaffected terms, that *Hardyknute*, after drenching himself with a horn of wine, *stared about him, and died*. Our language, however, will not do complete justice to those harmonious and significant words, *ymbstarud* (or, as it should rather have been written—starude,) and *swelt*.—The sculpture of the fatal horn itself, decorated with the Danish raven, affords sufficient room for belief that the imitative arts, even at that early period [1042], were not unsuccessfully cultivated in England.—The public is now waiting, with every mark of impatience, for a plate representing this precious marble, as well as for a perusal of Mr. *Pegge's* illustration of it, in the next volume of the Society's Archæological Collections.

"But, notwithstanding this venerable relic has passed the ordeal of such well-instructed and microscopic eyes, a set of ri-

having been betrayed by a hoax into a situation the most mortifying and trying to the temper that

diculous and shallow critics are to be met with, who either ignorantly or maliciously pronounce the whole inscription, &c. to be the forgery of some modern wag. They say, that it was designedly left with the cutler, as a trap for a certain antiquary, who deliberately and obligingly walked into it:—that its exhibition was accompanied with a specious request from its clandestine owner, that he might be assisted by the learned, in ascertaining the quality of the stone, and the true import of the mystic characters upon it; though he perfectly knew that the substance containing these letters, &c. was no other than a bit of broken chimney-piece, Saxonified by himself in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.—The same malignant junto likewise disseminate a report, that the capitals in question are not engraved, but corroded by aqua-fortis, a chymical invention posterior to the reign of *Hardyknute*. Nay, to such extremes do real or affected prejudices against a genuine piece of Saxon literature transport these scoffers, that they venture to assert that all the captivating discolourations on its surface are the mere effects of repeated urinary sprinkles, which, by degrees, induced a mellow cast of antiquity over the whole tablet.—They moreover declare, that *ipse doli fabricator* contrived to procure admission for some of his associates, on the very evening when the dissertation of Mr. *Pegge* was read by a Pro-Secretary; and that these accomplices are every where describing it as a production intentionally jocular; and add, that it was as unsuspectingly listened to by the Society, as was the performance of a Dutch translation of Fielding's Tom Thumb, which the Burgomasters of Amsterdam received, from first to last, with that profound and silent attention which becomes an enlightened audience at a deep tragedy.—Lastly,

can be imagined. As, from the distance of time, and the scarcity of the work, some of the particulars may not be unacceptable to the reader, and, as it may also serve as a beacon or warning voice to the tyro in virtu, we hope to be excused for having made so long an extract.

they would wantonly persuade their hearers, that the senior Secretary (if experiments were thought needful on the occasion) most zealously offered to drain a horn of equal dimensions with that of *Hardyknute*, provided it were first replenished with ancient and sound port, such as he, the said Secretary, had often quaffed (though with strict moderation, and merely to wash down the cobwebs of Archæology) on Thursday evenings, at the Somerset Coffee-house, in the Strand.

"How much is the impertinent levity of this age to be deplored!—Pity it is, that the poems of *Rowley*, and the record of *Hardyknute's* death were destined to emerge during such an æra of laughter, scepticism, and incredulity."

R. D.