

able contribution to an interesting department of Archæological study, extending the reputation of its author for curious research, accurate scholarship and judicious criticism and proving that materials and encouragement for such pursuits are not altogether wanting to us, far as we may be removed from the objects themselves of whose worn and partially defaced inscriptions we attempt to penetrate the meaning.

It is possible that many of our readers may not be fully alive to the kind of interest belonging to the study of ancient inscriptions, or to the nature of the difficulties which must be encountered in attempting to explain them. We may therefore be excused for offering a few words on these subjects. We desire, of course, to understand as far as possible the moral and social condition, the customs, habits and sentiments of the more celebrated nations of antiquity, from whom we have in part derived our own civilization, whose literature still informs our minds and cultivates our taste, whose remaining works of art display the grandeur as well as refinement of their ideas, and every particular of whose history, as known from their own records, engages our attention, as increasing our experience of human character as well as interesting our feelings. We are even curious to learn what we can of the condition, opinions and customs of savage nations and in this connection look with interest at specimens of their rude arts which may fall in our way. How much more then must inscribed monuments, giving particulars of former occupants of a country who were eminent in war, in arts, and in cultivation, deserve investigation as being likely to illustrate some things we have read of, or to afford some fresh insight into the condition and habits of a great nation. Whilst examining such objects we have a consciousness of the reality of the records of long distant periods which otherwise we could scarcely attain. We can never forget the feeling with which we ourselves surveyed the impression of a shoe on an antique tile taken from a Roman Sepulchre, which must have been accidentally made before the tile was burned and which seemed to bring up before us the life of a remote age; and if such a trifle as this can produce such an effect, how much more interesting and suggestive would be the disinterred expressions of the religious and domestic sentiments and the business transactions of long departed generations. It is truly wonderful to observe in how many ways knowledge of the past obtained from other sources is confirmed, cleared and realized to our conceptions, and how many particulars which could not have been otherwise obtained are brought to our knowledge by the intelligent study of ancient inscriptions. It needs indeed to be an intelligent study, for were all remaining inscriptions perfect in their condition, what difficulties have to be overcome in correctly expanding the contractions so abundantly found in them; what knowledge of ancient names, of old forms of letters, and archaic or provincial terminations of words; of the names of the numerous pagan deities, of places and tribes, of official titles military and civil, and above all of the contents of other known inscriptions in which something similar may often be found, is required to give even a chance of success, and with all this what cultivated reasoning powers, what patient thought, what quickness in perceiving analogies, find their exercise in such inquiries! But in assuming the completeness of the monuments, we have set aside in very many instances much the largest portion of the actual