

nothing, and we are told, that in consequence of a wager with one Sienna, he spent a whole day at an auction; and when it was ended, he recapitulated every article, that had been sold, together with the prices, and the names of the purchasers in their proper order, without erring in one point, as was proved by the clerk who followed him with his book. Lipsius, so celebrated for his erudition, remembered the whole history of Tacitus, and pledged himself to recite, word for word, any passage that might be required, consenting, at the same time, to allow a person to stand by him with a dagger, and to plunge it into his body if he did not faithfully repeat the words of the author. Muret relates, that he dictated one day to a young Corsican, an innumerable multitude of Greek, Latin, and barbarous words, all distinct from each other, and that when he was tired of dictating, the Corsican repeated them in a reversed order, beginning at the last. These examples are, no doubt, astonishing; but what is related of Jedediah Buxton, a poor illiterate, English peasant, seems to exceed them all.

John Buxton, the grandfather of this singular character, was vicar of Elmeton, a small village, not far from Chesterfield, in Derbyshire; and his father, William Buxton, was school master of the same parish, where Jedediah was born, about the beginning of the present century, in what year we cannot precisely ascertain; but it is probable that it was in 1704 or 1705.

Notwithstanding the profession of his father, Jedediah's education seems totally to have been neglected, for he never was taught either to read or write. How he came first to know the relative proportions of numbers, their powers and progressive denominations, he never could remember; but to these objects he applied the whole force of his mind, and upon these his attention was so constantly rivited, that he frequently took no notice of external objects, and when he did, it was only with respect to their numbers.—This propensity of his mind to calculation manifested itself almost on every occasion, and seemed like a kind of instinct, to turn his thoughts continually to this one point. If any space of time was mentioned before him, he would soon ascertain, that it contained so many minutes; and if any distance, he would assign the number of hair breadths in it, even when no question was asked him by the company.

By this method, he greatly increased the powers of his memory with respect to

figures, and stored up several common products in his mind, such as the number of minutes in a year; of hair-breadths in a mile; and many others, to which he could have immediate recourse when necessary. When he once comprehended a question, which he could not do without some difficulty, and after a certain length of time, he began to work with amazing facility, and would leave a long question half wrought, and resume it at the end of several months, beginning where he had broke off, and proceeding regularly till it was completed.

His memory, it appears, would have been equally retentive with respect to other objects, had he bestowed the same attention upon them; but his perpetual application to figures, for which the powers of his mind seem to have been wonderfully calculated, prevented him from making the smallest acquisition in any other branch of knowledge; and his ideas on that account were as confined perhaps as those of a boy of ten years of age in the same class of life. He was sometimes asked, on his return from church, whether he remembered the text, or any of the sermon; but he never could repeat a single word of either, so absorbed had his thoughts been even during divine service, either in dividing some time or space into the smallest known parts, or resolving some problem that had been given him as a test of his abilities. His power of abstraction was so great, that no noise whatever could disturb him; and when asked any question, he would immediately reply, and return to his calculation, without any confusion, or the loss of more time than his answer required. His method of working was peculiar to himself, and by no means the shortest and clearest, as will appear by the following example:

Being required to multiply 456 by 378, he gave the product as soon as a person in company had completed it in the common way, and when requested to work it audibly, that his method might be known, he multiplied 456, first by 5, which produced 2280; this he again multiplied by 20, and found the product 45600; which was the multiplicand multiplied by 100; this product he again multiplied by 3, which produced 136800, the sum of the multiplicand multiplied by 300. It remained therefore, to multiply this by 78, which he effected by multiplying 2280 (the product of the multiplicand multiplied by 5) by 15; 5 times 15 being 75; this product being 34,200; he added to the 136,800, which was the multiplicand multiplied by 300 and this produced 171,000, which was 375 times 456. To complete