

REPORT concerning the COLLECTION of COINS and
MEDALS belonging to the ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY.

May 22. 1820.

ALTHOUGH it is only a partial report which I have it in my power as yet to make on the subject of the Coins, I was desirous that the meetings of this session should not terminate without affording the Society some information as to the state of arrangement to which their collection of Coins had been brought. A good deal of time and labour was necessarily required to reduce into a certain state of general and preparatory arrangement the entire mass of Coins, before being able to subject any part to such minute examination and description as the preparation of a catalogue requires. The collection consists of Scottish and English Coins pretty complete, Roman, Greek, a mass of foreign coins of most of the European nations, and a few Oriental, with a collection of Medals commemorative of particular events. Considerable progress has been made in the general arrangement of the whole; but the only series which is completed, with a descriptive catalogue, is the Scottish, from which, however, the Society will be able to form an estimate of the value of the whole collection. I am anxious to engage the attention of the Society to this branch of its pursuits, in order that the means within its reach may be taken to carry on the improvement of the collection, which seems to have suffered much from the state of suspended animation into which the Society had for some years fallen. The profusion and value of donations of coins and medals which was showered upon the Society from all quarters, for several years after its first institution, shewed not only the public estimation of the importance of this branch of its pursuits, but likewise the promp-

titude with which its views were then, and would still be seconded, were the Society heartily disposed to give it the necessary encouragement.

With regard to the Scottish series, the arrangement I have adopted is simply chronological, without separation of the metals, as it appeared to me best adapted to the purposes of the Society, and to a collection which is in progress of being completed. There are at present considerable deficiencies in the series; but the value of duplicates will, I have no doubt, prove sufficient to furnish their supply, which would enable the Society to accomplish a task long expected at their hands; I mean to publish a complete and accurate series of the Scottish Coinage. The catalogue I have constructed is in the usual form, containing a minute description of each individual, (to which the circumstances of its discovery, when curious, ought to be added; but this I regret not having had the means to accomplish) the size,—value,—weight,—and place in the collection. The column of weights is not yet filled up, as I had not the facility at the time of ascertaining it. Where deficiencies occur in the series, corresponding blanks are left in the drawers and catalogue; these are considerable in the later period, from the Union of the Crowns to that of the kingdoms. Though the coins of that period are of less value historically, or as matters of curiosity, it ought, nevertheless, to be supplied, so as to complete the series down to the period when Scotland ceased to possess a separate mintage.

A list of the principal deficiencies is prepared, which the Society will doubtless consider it proper to make some use of towards obtaining their supply; with a view to which I have made up a list of the duplicates of the Scottish coins. They may either be used as a fund of barter for those coins wanted to complete the collection, or sold for the same purpose; which I rather incline to think the most advisable plan, on account of the delay and trouble attending the arrangement of any exchange of coins with those who may be disposed to part with such as are wanted. Objections have been stated to the propriety of disposing of any part of what has been presented to the Society, though for the general benefit of their collections; but I confess that, under proper restrictions and precautions, I cannot see any ground for hesitating, and certainly very little expediency in adhering to a rule of that kind, with regard to any part of our property, and least of all in the case of our coins, as the object which every donor must have had, in presenting coins to the Society, could only be to forward the completion of a collection which the public may have the benefit of consulting, instead of being shut up from all useful purposes in the repositories of private collectors.

The British Museum accordingly act upon this principle in disposing occasionally by auction of the duplicates of their coins and books; their example may safely be adopted as a precedent sufficiently authoritative for the determination of this Society.