THE

LITERARY DIARY;

OR,

Improved Common-Place Book.

A COMMON-PLACE BOOK is a Register, or orderly collection of things which occur worthy to be noted and retained, in the course of a man's reading or study; so disposed, as that, among a multiplicity of subjects, any one may easily be found.

COMMON-PLACE BOOKS are of great service: they are a kind of promptuaries or storehouses, wherein to reposit our own ideas,* as well as the most valuable thoughts of others, to be ready at hand when wanted. Various plans have been laid down by different persons; but that which comes best recommended, is the method of that great master of order, Mr. LOCKE.

I.—MR. LOCKE'S METHOD.

The following directions are amply sufficient to explain his method. They are given entire, in order that his original plan may be adopted by those who prefer it to the IMPROVED METHOD *which is suggested in the subsequent observations.*

DIRECTIONS.

1. In paging the book, make the figure on the top of the left hand page serve for the right hand also: thus every subject will have a double page assigned to it, and a multiplicity of figures will be avoided.

2. Consider to what head the thing you would enter is most naturally referred; in this head, or word, regard is to be had to the initial letter, and the first vowel that follows it, which are the characteristic letters on which the whole use of the Index depends.

Suppose, for instance, you would note down a passage which refers to the head *Beauty:* B is the initial letter, and e the first vowel; look into the Index for the partition B, and therein the line e, (which is the place for all words whose first letter is B, and first vowel e; as *Beauty, Beneficence, Blessings, Blemishes,* &c.) and if no numbers are already inserted to direct you to any page of the book where words of this characteristic have been entered, turn to the first blank *double* page you find, and write what you have occasion for under the head *Beauty;* beginning the head in the margin, and writing what follows within the marginal line, that the head may stand out and show itself.

3. Should that double page be partly occupied by some word of the same characteristic, proceed as if it were a fresh page, by writing the head, as above directed, immediately under the subject which is already entered.

4. When the double page is filled, write at the bottom, in the margin, the number of the next blank double page, (unless it be the one immediately following, in which case there is no necessity for a direction;) and underneath the head-word, in the new page, write the number of that from which the subject is brought forward.

5. Whenever you commence a fresh double page, enter it in the Index.

6. If the head-word be a monosyllable, beginning with a vowel, as Art, Egg, &c., it should be entered in the Index under A a, E e, &c.

Lest it be imagined that these classes are not sufficient to comprehend all kinds of subjects without confusion, we are assured by Mr. LOCKE, that in all his collections, for a long series of years, he never found any deficiency or imperfection in his invention.

* The author of Hudibras had a common-place book, in which he had reposited, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or inclination produced; those thoughts which were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.—JOHNSON.

II.—THE IMPROVED METHOD.

The high reputation which Mr. LOCKE's method has acquired, both in this country and on the Continent, is a strong testimony of its merit. His comprehensive Index certainly unites two great requisites—simplicity of arrangement, and facility of reference. But these advantages are partly counterbalanced by the obscurity which attends such concise notices as his Index requires; and by that want of connexion between the subjects of the same page, which is the natural consequence of an indiscriminate alphabetical arrangement.

To secure the advantages, and avoid the faults of Mr. LOCKE's method, it is necessary that separate books be appropriated to every important or general subject; or, that the contents of the same book be distributed under certain general heads. The nature and number of these will vary, as the inclination of the individual leads him to prefer one branch of literature or science to another: but it is imagined, that the table, which is given in page 8, will be sufficiently extensive for general use; at the same time that it affords room for the insertion of any other minor divisions of a subject, which may particularly interest the writer.

In the use of this Table there can be no difficulty. The number of the page whereon each general subject is begun, must be specified in the line which that subject occupies in the table. Farther references will be requisite when great progress has been made, or when the regularity of the numbers is interrupted by pages dedicated to another general subject.

Every general subject will of course embrace a number of particular topics. The subject of each of these component parts should, where necessary, be expressed in the margin by an adequate word; which word should be referred to under its characteristic (viz., the first letter and first vowel) in Mr. LOCKE's ruled Index.

Every *original* paragraph should be distinguished with a number (1, 2, 3, &c.) inserted in the margin. These numbers should go on progressively through each general subject; but they must not be continued from one general subject to another. They serve to connect together, as well as to point out, the writer's casual observations. They also enable him to make notes or comments on any matter in his Common-place Book, by means of the reference which they afford from one place to another. If a passage in page 4, for instance, be commented upon in page 39, paragraph 48, these figures $\frac{4}{39}$ placed in the margin of page 4, opposite to that passage, will be a sufficient indication where such comment may be found.

Analyses of argumentative or didactic works are supposed to occupy a considerable portion of every Common-place Book. By this improvement on Mr. LOCKE's method, the utmost facility is afforded to that species of literary labour. The whole work, whatever it be, will rank under some one or other of the heads in the general Table; while the particular Index takes cognizance of every individual feature of it. The Treatise which is subjoined to these remarks, is itself an excellent specimen of analysis.

In a separate Common-place Book may be copied the most interesting and best written Letters, or parts of Letters, which every man receives in the course of his familiar correspondence. These collections, judiciously made, and thus arranged, form a constant source of the highest gratification.

III.—THE INDEX OF ONE OR TWO LETTERS ON A PAGE.

It is one advantage of the present plan, that it does not interfere with any other arrangement. Even those who prefer an alphabetical Index, wherein the title of every subject may be registered at large, will find the space which Mr. LOCKE's Index occupies too small to be of consequence. It is then merely a blank paper book, the last pages of which are appropriated to an alphabetical Index of one or two letters on a page, according to the importance of the letter.

IV.—THE LITERARY DIARY.

To use this book as a DIARY, nothing more is requisite than to date it regularly, and write straight forward, disregarding the arrangement of each subject under its respective class. Place the day of the month by itself in the *centre* of a line, that the collections of each day may be readily distinguished. Make a *marginal* note of the subject of every paragraph, and enter the principal word of that note in the Index, according to the rule laid down in the IMPROVED METHOD. Connect the dispersed parts of the same subject together, by inserting in the margin, immediately under the note, the number of that page whereon it is continued.

AN ABRIDGMENT
OF THE AURIFODINA OF DREXELIUS.

BY GEORGE HORNE, D.D.
LATE BISHOP OF NORWICH.

This is an excellent tract on the necessity of taking notes in writing, in order to profit by what we read; and the manner of doing it is prescribed.

The memory is unfaithful, and the best memory cannot retain all. *Augustin* complained of the many things he had suffered himself to lose, and was obliged to seek after them again. Much time is lost in this way. Instances are given of learned men endued with great memory, who yet all assisted themselves by making collections—*ergo notandum et excerpendum.*

Pliny Secundus, the secretary of nature, attained to prodigious erudition by this method, which he observed constantly; insomuch that his nephew tells us, he never read anything without making extracts. While he was lying in the sunshine; at supper; after supper; while he was bathing; while he was dressing, *liber legebatur adnotabatur.* Even while he was on a journey, an amanuensis was with him, who wrote in gloves if the weather was cold. While his nephew was walking out for the air, he used that memorable expression, *poteras has horas non perdere—O temporis parsimoniam, quàm ignota es et rara!—Omnium rerum jactura reparabilis, præterquàm temporis.*

Extracts are necessary, even to a poet, who works from his imagination. We see an example of this in Herman Hugo, whose *Pia Desideria* are an ingenious contexture of the Scriptures and the Fathers together; out of which, when he had collected, he made this excellent use. Extracts are the life and soul of *history:* and no history can be composed without previous notation. Even orators must read, and note, and transfer the excellences of others into their own page. Which of them all did ever arrive at the summit of learning without constant application to notes and extracts? Aristotle exceeded all that went before him; but not without the making of infinite collections from the books they had left behind them. Among great divines, examples are given of *Augustin*, *Jerom*, *Cyprian* and *Bernard;* and after every one, *Drexelius* presses the inference, that nothing great ever was, or ever will be done, without industrious notation. At last he adds an example from his own experience, and protests that he would not part with his notes for any price but that of heaven itself. In displaying the profit of it, he observes—1. That whatever subject was proposed, he could tell all the authors that had written upon it, even though the subject were minute and out of the way. A friend wanted to borrow his book: but most authors are of use only to those that have read them. He reckons a man nothing, if he could not talk an hour upon a subject. 2. In preaching: If the Scriptures were duly read and extracted, a man's store would never be exhausted. 3. For instructing any person who comes to consult or ask. Particulars of time and place can rarely be recollected without notes. 4. A man may subsist upon his own stock, in case of sickness, or under any hindrance, or in time of age, when he must write, but cannot read. It is miserable to be running to the baker, when we should be going to dinner; think of the ant and the bee. The author declares of himself, with advantage and satisfaction he used the fruits of thirty years' labour, and that, if his life were to last ever so long, his fund would never be out. He was a great example of his own doctrine. 5. In all kinds of speaking and writing, he found himself in readiness: and could engage to write two books in a year, on different subjects, out of his *excerpta*. There is little difficulty in building, when all the necessary materials are ready at hand. 6. It is of excellent use in conversation; keeps it from flagging, and places us above the necessity of vain repetitions, such as women and ignorant persons fall into for want of matter.

After the doctrine has been confirmed by testimonies and examples, the author considers the *reasons*. 1. It is observed, that the attention is fixed better by writing and noting, than by repeated readings. Dionysius of Halicarnassus reports, that Demosthenes transcribed Thucydides eight times. Jerom wrote over many volumes. 2. The matter is deeper impressed upon the mind. In reading the eye wanders, and the judgment is less exact. Money is not examined merely by looking at it: we rub it, and weigh it and sound it, to distinguish between the precious and the vile; and by a similar method we must distinguish truth from error, and one style from another. 3. What is written is not forgotten—*litera scripta manet*—as it was said in a former chapter. 4. How many volumes, for the benefit of the public, have been sent abroad from the mere industry of collecting! *Antiquæ lectiones, Flori*

legia, Horæ subsecivæ, Musarum horti, &c., &c. And if we find the collections of others so serviceable, how much more so will our own be! When we ourselves are the collectors, our own uses and purposes are provided for; and we may derive more use from one page of this sort, than from a hundred by another person, who works according to his own views, not according to yours; as every scholar will discover, who has any exercise in this way: he takes only what suits him, turning and twisting every stream into his own channel. (This teaches how we are exposed when another person picks out a history for us.) 5. The ant collects in summer for her food in winter. This is beautifully described and applied—*itionibus ac reditionibus eandem viam relegit millies, fatigari nescia—brumæ injurias non metuit, infacundam hiemem non ægrè tolerat, &c.* The happy industry of the bee is described with the same poetical elegance—*Omnes apiculæ flores delibant, et velut judicio excerpunt—violarum suaves divitias—nec extrahunt nisi quod melioris succi est; venenum quod in flore deterius, araneis relinquunt. Hæc apum sedulitas, et in excerpendo studium, mellis et ceræ thesauris orbem opulentat.* Let us be as wise as they in our studies; let us take the best authors, and out of them the best things: otherwise, like summer flies, we have neither honey nor wax; our conversation and writings are poor and empty. 6. Notes form an epitome, and contain the essence of a library, and will supply the place of it: they will travel with us, where books are difficult to be met with. Take what you want out of the book you are reading, and it is done for ever: you need never turn it over any more. Incredible how useful a volume may be compiled in how short a time! Your own papers will always be found your best library.

Objections answered.—1. I have no design to write volumes like Origen. *A.* But the smallest thing cannot be well done without it—hence we have so many *jejune* compositions—and when any public exercise comes in course, not having dug, we are forced to beg and borrow.—— 2. Another objection: that persons who write, neglect the use of memory, and so lose it. *A.* This is not to set aside, but to assist the memory, and keep it in exercise; for, after all, you must remember when, where, and what you have noted. Assistance your memory must have, unless it is universal, and you can carry off by heart the books of a library.——3. Many, and they not unlearned, do not practise this method. *A.* Make not those your example who turn out of the straight road, but follow those who are in it. They who do as well as they can without these helps, would do much better with them.——4. The old philosophers delivered to their scholars by ear and memory. *A.* But they wrote afterwards at home. The practice of all universities is an answer to this, where they write down notes of the lectures given to them.——5. You may lose your notes, and then what becomes of your learning? *A.* What if the sky should fall? Do men avoid laying up money, for fear the thieves should have it? or to build houses, for fear they should be burned? And suppose I should lose my papers, I may at the worst have more left upon my mind, than you who never wrote at all.——6. It will be troublesome to carry them about. *A.* If they are collected with judgment, according to the method I teach, they will never rise to a great bulk: besides, you, who are so afraid of being overburthened, consider how many articles were carried from place to place by every Roman soldier—*cibum, utensilia, vallum, arma*—and is not learning a sort of warfare?——7. It is a work of too much time. *A.* Your time cannot be better employed: and to some persons, all the time they spend in reading without it, is thrown away. Marking the book, as some people do, is a slovenly trick, and of little use.——8. There are indexes. *A.* Into which you will often look without obtaining any satisfaction—They promise great things, and often do little—Authors seldom make them for themselves—Many books have none—No index so good as our own, taken with the reading of the *context*—It is too late to consult indexes when you are to write or speak: and besides, it is part of the use of your own notes to direct you what books to consult, and what indexes to go to. Idleness is at the bottom of all these excuses: you read for ease and pleasure, not for profit; your reading is of no value—It is not worth while to build a granary to lay up chaff. There is no more benefit in reading a great deal, than in eating a great deal: the good is from what is properly digested. The work may have its trouble; but nothing valuable is obtained without it. Many of moderate parts become great by the practice of noting. That is properly your own, which is the result of your own observation: and nobody can tell, but by experience, the pleasure with which such a work is surveyed, both in its growth, and when it is finished. The scholar enters into his labours, as the bee into its hive.

PART II.

The rules by which our practice is to be guided are these following.

1. To enter upon the work *early in life:* the sooner we begin the more we shall collect: musicians begin their notes when they are children; but better late than never. 2. To do it *with judgment.* The great question is, What to take, and what to leave? and the best way of settling it, is to lay in good principles of truth, (happy are they, thrice happy, that find them,) and to propose some scope, some objects, at which we aim more particularly. 3. To do it *continually*—the pen should be always in hand—no book so bad, said Pliny, but some good to be found in it; and so observes our Mr. Herbert, where he treats of a parson's knowledge. Practice makes all things easy, and skill will come with use

—read no book *quin excerpas*. 4. Extracts should consist not of common, but of select things. 5. At times review and read over what you have written; no greater pleasure: a man surveys his labours as he does the garden which he has planted, and sees how plants flourish in their proper borders. There is great profit in this, because it transplants things from the book to the memory. 6. Always keep in view the end of your own studies—The philologist fixes on one thing, the orator on another, the physician on another, &c., and the theologian on something different from them all. He will be thinking of the *places*, the *people*, the *times*, the *vices*, *errors*, &c., with which he is concerned; if an improvement occurs, he will note it as a thing suggested by the note he is taking.

The method. Every thing that is done well must be done in some order. It was the method of Drexelius to divide all his collections into three classes, which he called *Lemmata*, *Adversaria*, *Historica*; of these he had one title for *sacred*, another for *profane*; so in all he had six sortments. The first comprehended what related to virtues and vices, and subjects of conversation in common life; the second, wise sayings and notable things, ancient rites and customs; the third, examples at large from history. These were all referred to in three alphabetical indexes. Every person may choose his own method, with a good index accommodated. When Drexelius was asked by his friend Faustinus, how he could do so much as he had done? he answered, the year has 365 days, or 8,460 hours; in so many hours great things may be done—*nulla dies, nulla hora sine linea*—the slow tortoise made a long journey by losing no *time*. He had several choice subjects, for each of which he reserved a volume by itself, and these he called works *singularis industriæ*; such were his *Res Nummaria*, which contained the whole history of money, and the wealth of different ages and empires; and his *Lusus Urbani*; his Epitome of Baronius, Livy, Tacitus, Cæsar, the two Plinys, and many others; his philological collection of words and sentences.

PART III.

What authors we ought to read. 1. Every author who is the best in his way. 2. Such authors as suit best with our own genius. 3. The ancient writers are generally to be preferred to modern.

How we ought to read. 1. Not to affect that rambling sort of reading, which looks at every thing, but sticks to nothing. 2. To read an author through, from the beginning to the end. 3. Not to read cursorily, but with meditation and steadiness. The reasons are these. 1. Against rambling. You must settle somewhere before you can extract. He that is always travelling, will have many landlords, but few friends. Meats do not profit, unless they are retained in the stomach; the wound will not heal, which is constantly interrupted with fresh applications: the plants will not thrive which are too often transplanted. The squeamish stomach is amused with variety, and tastes of many things. Many persons read, as dogs drink out of the Nile, as they run, and therefore never profit much. Not more than two authors should be studied at the same time. And in all authors three things are to be observed. 1. The matter or subject, with the drift of his argument. 2. The words, style, and construction of his sentences. 3. The numbers, and cadence; for not only poets, but orators also consider the harmony of their periods. If the style of an author be rough, hobbling, and inharmonious, the reader is disgusted.

The memory will receive great help from method and imagination. Method is almost everything in memory—*ordo anima memoriæ*. Nothing is so irregular in its nature, but that method will reduce it to order, and make it portable—*omnium instar mihi ordo*; without it we may as well write on water or sand. It is not so clear what he means by *imagination*; but I suppose it to be, the frequent thinking of a thing over again in the mind, by which means it will be so fixed as never to depart. As the mind was made to contain great things, let it not be overloaded with trifles. Remember *sin*, to bewail it; *kindness*, to return it; *death*, to prepare for it; *mercy*, to hope for it; *wrath*, to fear it; *eternity*, to despise the world, and all temporal things—so to *pass* through things temporal, as not to lose the things eternal.

CONCLUSION.

The improvement of our time is the first consideration in human life, for on time depends eternity. Nothing but time can make a scholar or a divine; and he that makes the most of it, by some such method as is here recommended, is the wisest man. Many never discover its value till they have lost it, and would give the whole world, if they had it, to recover it again. The only laudable avarice is that of our time; of which there have been many great examples. Cato Uticensis made it his practice to carry a book with him into the senate-house, that, instead of hearing idle talk, he might read till business began. Plato had Sophron, the poet of Syracuse, laid at his pillow when he was dying. Abbas Dorotheus had a book open while he was eating, and by his bedside against he waked. Bernard said, "Let us talk this hour out: on this hour eternity may depend." Beware of thieves, but especially of those who rob you of your time, for which they can never make you any amends. Read, note, be vigilant, be active, stock your memory; let no hour or minute be without its use. *Magna vitæ pars elabitur* malè *agentibus*, *maxima* nihil *agentibus*, *tota* aliud *agentibus*, i. e., in doing what is nothing to the purpose: Teach us, good Lord, so to value our time, and *number our days*, as to *apply our hearts unto wisdom*.

TABLE OF GENERAL SUBJECTS.