Published January 1, 1805, by William Miller, Albemarle Street.

PLATE I.

POTTERY.

THE useful and elegant art of pottery is of great antiquity: convenience alone, it is likely, dictated the operations of those who first formed vessels of clay; but as facility of execution disposes the mind to improvement, it is not improbable that ornamental works of this material were produced among the early efforts of human ingenuity. The Egyptians excelled in this art: and there are various beautiful allusions to the potter, interspersed in the Sacred Writings.

The many antique vases, lamps, ornaments, and utensils of sacrifice, &c. discovered during the last century in the subterraneous researches made in Italy and Greece, prove what exquisite perfection this art had attained near three thousand years ago. The Chinese trace their knowledge of pottery to very high antiquity. The manufacture of porcelaine was practised by them as early as the fifth century: it was for ages made entirely colourless, when they discovered that a deep blue, a species of lapis lazuli, would unite withit. This they employed for many years in ornamenting their ware, till perseverance in experiment at length enabled them to enamel their works with all the teints of the rainbow. The process for making this china, they preserved with impenetrable secresy for several centuries; its fame, however, spreading, and the demand for it increasing in the different parts of the world, induced the ingenious of various countries to attempt the discovery, and many men highly eminent for science exerted themselves in the pursuit. The clue to this secret was, no doubt, given by the Jesuit missionaries, sent to China by the Duke of Tuscany: but the Saxons claim the honour of making the discovery; the Dresden ware having been the first of European manufacture, which soon attained such perfection as to possess some qualities superior to the true china, and produce larger prices. Since this, manufactories have been established for making porcelaine in most European countries, and with various success. The Dresden china has long been celebrated; the French is famous for its admirable whiteness; Italy has produced excellent copies of the antique figures by this process; Delft, in Holland, established a ware, which experienced an extensive circulation; and England, in addition to her various manufactures of china ware, which are much admired, has had the honour of restoring to the world the process of making the antique pottery in imitation of the Etruscan and Greek. We owe the

revival of this invaluable branch of that art to the ingenuity of Mr. Josiah Wedgewood, who, with the assistance of Mr. Bentley, analized every fragment of the antique he could procure, with unceasing perseverance, till the discovery was complete. Since which time, the modern Etruria has sent out an immense number of urns, vases, figures, vessels, and ornaments, composed with great spirit and beauty, and executed with surprising delicacy. He engaged artists of high repute to make copies of the finest specimens of the antique, and also to model original classic works, which were manufactured of various texture. Hence our houses are now decorated with ornaments, the simplicity and grace of which have contributed in a high degree to the improvement of the public taste.

Formerly a great passion existed, in this country, for collecting vases, jars, cups, and other ornaments of porcelaine, which were purchased at immense prices; some of the jars were several feet high. It was customary to have them in the apartments of the great; and ladies placed Chinese vases in their dressing-rooms, filled with odoriferous herbs and flowers. There were collectors of Delft ware also: a pair of jars of this ware, and of no great magnitude, has produced three hundred guineas at a sale. This taste for the grotesque forms of the Chinese, happily gave place to the beauty and justness of proportion so obvious in the antique, and the China ornament is now principally confined to the museum of the virtuoso.

The subject of this plate is employed in making the red pottery, and was selected, in preference to any other, from the picturesque simplicity of the wheel, &c.

THE

COSTUME

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

DESIGNED, ENGRAVED, AND WRITTEN BY

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LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM MILLER, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1808.