

Obituary of remarkable Persons; with Biographical Anecdotes

Jan 3 ...

At Etruria, in Staffordshire, aged 64, Josiah Wedgwood, esq. F.R. and A. S.S.; to whose indefatigable labours is owing the establishment of a manufacture that has opened a new scene of extensive commerce, before unknown to this or any other country. It is unnecessary to say that this alludes to the Pottery of Staffordshire, which, by the united efforts of Mr. Wedgwood and his late partner, Mr. Bentley, has been carried to a degree of perfection, both in the line of utility and ornament, that leaves all works, antient or modern, far behind. But, though this improvement of the manufacture in which he was bred, and which

intimately. Another correspondent adds, that "Mr. W. was the younger son of a potter, but derived little or no property from his father, whose possessions consisted chiefly of a small entailed estate, which descended to the eldest son. He was the maker of his own fortune; and his country has been benefited in a proportion not to be calculated. His many discoveries of new species of earthen-wares and porcelains, his studies forms and chaste style of decoration, and the correctness and judgement with which all his works were executed under his own eye, and by artists, for the most part, of his own forming, have turned the current in this branch of commerce; for before his time, England imported the finer earthen-wares; but, for more than twenty years past, she has exported them to a very great annual amount, the whole of which is drawn from the earth, and from the industry of the inhabitants; while the national taste has been improved, and its reputation raised in foreign countries. His inventions have prodigiously increased the number of persons employed in the potteries, and in the traffick and transport of their materials from distant parts of the kingdom : and this class of manufacturers is also indebted to him for much mechanical contrivance and arrangement in their operations; his private manufactory having had, for 30 years and upwards, all the efficacy of a public work of experiment. Neither was he unknown in the walks of philosophy. His communications in the Royal Society shew a mind enlightened by science, and contributed to procure him the esteem of scientific men at home and throughout Europe. His invention of a thermometer for measuring the higher degrees of heat employed in the various arts, is of the highest importance to their promotion, and will add celebrity to his name. At an early period of his life, feeling the impossibility of extending considerably the manufactory he was engaged in on the spot which gave him birth, without the advantage of inland navigation, he was the proposer of the Grand Trunk Canal, and the chief agent in obtaining the act of parliament for making it, against the prejudices of the landed interest, which at that time stood very high, and but just before had been with great difficulty overcome in another quarter by all the powerful influence of a noble Duke, whose canal was at that time but lately finished. The Grand Trunk Canal is 90 miles in length, uniting the Rivers Trent and Mersey; and branches have since been made from it to the Severn, to Oxford, and to many other parts; and it will also have a communication with the Grand Junction Canal from Braunston to Brentford.— Having acquired a large fortune, his purse was always open to the calls of charity, and to the support of every institution for the public good. To his relations, friends, and neighbours, he was endeared by his many private virtues; and his loss will be deeply and long deplored by all who had the pleasure of knowing them intimately, and by the numerous objects to whom his benevolence was extended : and he will be regretted by his country as the able and zealous supporter of her commerce, and the steady patron of every valuable interest of society."

T H E
Gentleman's Magazine :
For JANUARY, 1795.
BEING THE FIRST NUMBER OF VOL. LXV. PART I.

had been the employment of his family for several generations, occupied much of Mr. W's time, he was frequently employed in planning designs that will for ever record the greatness of his mind; for, however the practicability of uniting the Eastern and Western coasts of this kingdom, by means of inland navigation, may have been shewn by Yarranton and others, yet it remained for Mr. W. to propose such measures for uniting the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal with the navigable part of the River Trent (in executing which he was happy in the assistance of the late ingenious Mr. Brindley, whom he never mentioned but with respect), as first fully carried the great plan into execution, and thus enabled the manufacturers of the inland part of that county and its neighbourhood to obtain, from the distant shores of Devonshire, Dorsetshire, and Kent, those materials of which the Staffordshire ware is composed; affording, at the same time, a ready conveyance of the manufacture to distant countries; and thus not only to rival, but undersell, at foreign markets, a commodity which has proved, and must continue to prove, of infinite advantage to these kingdoms; as the ware, when formed, owes its value almost wholly to the labour of the honest and industrious poor, who have, in Mr. W, lost a kind master and generous benefactor. Still farther to promote the interest and benefit of his neighbourhood, Mr. W. planned, and carried into execution, a turnpike-road, ten miles in length, through that part of Staffordshire called The Pottery; thus opening another source of traffick, if, by frost or other impediment, the carriage by water should be interrupted. Having given this imperfect sketch of his public life, let us consider him in his private capacity; wherein, whether he is regarded as a husband, a father, a master, or a friend, his conduct will be found most exemplary.

Such is the account of Mr. W. sent us by an old and valuable correspondent, who knew him long and