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21If the only merit which the Anglo-Saxons could claim, rested upon their good fortune to be the ancestors of a nation so highly gifted, so renowned, and so wealthy as the English, we might expect, that in no country would the antiquities connected with such a people be more industriously and more zealously cultivated than in England. And yet nothing is more true, and at the same time more surprising, than that they have been nowhere more neglected throughout the civilized world. The slightest reflection will teach us, that, without a due attention to Anglo-Saxon literature, we can neither estimate nor understand the importance or the progress of that of the present day; since the first perceptible links in the long chain of improvements, both of the English language and its literature, are to be found in this neglected lore of their forefathers. But this seems to have been altogether overlooked, and this ancient treasury has been regarded as a dunghill, where, because the pearls did not lie exposed and obvious to every passing eye, they have been thought not worth seeking.