

them from its rigid embrace ; but they have, we find, caught no harm when under its care. Ere the skeleton of the Bruce, disinterred after the lapse of five centuries, was recommitted to the tomb, such measures were taken to secure its preservation, that, were it to be again disinterred, even after as many more centuries had passed, it might be found retaining unbroken its gigantic proportions. There was molten pitch poured over the bones, in a state of sufficient fluidity to permeate all the pores, and fill up the central hollows, and which, soon hardening around them, formed a bituminous matrix, in which they may lie unchanged for a thousand years. Now, exactly such was the process to which nature resorted with these gigantic skeletons of the Old Red Sandstone. Like the bones of the Bruce, they are bones steeped in pitch ; and so thoroughly is every pore and hollow still occupied, that, when cast into the fire, they flame like torches. Though black as jet, they still retain, too, in a considerable degree, the peculiar *qualities* of the original substance. The late Mr. George Sanderson of Edinburgh, one of the most ingenious lapidaries in the kingdom, and a thoroughly intelligent man, made several preparations for me, for microscopic examination, from the teeth and bones ; and though they were by far the oldest vertebrate remains he had ever seen, they exhibited, he informed me, in the working, more of the characteristics of recent teeth and bone than any other fossils he had ever operated upon. Recent bone, when in the course of being reduced on the wheel to the degree of thinness necessary to secure transparency, is apt, under the heat induced by the friction, to acquire a springy elasticity, and to start up from the glass slip to which it has been cemented ; whereas bone in the fossil state usually lies as passive, in such circumstances, as the stone which en-