

ART. XI.—*Letter and Report respecting the Unpublished Commentary on Milton's Paradise Lost, by the late JOHN CALLANDER of Craigforth, Esq. in the possession of the Society.*

[Read 27th March 1826.]

THE attention of the Society was called to these MSS. by the following letter from MR DAVID LAING, addressed to DR HIBBERT, Secretary to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries:—

Edin^r. 18th March 1826.

MY DEAR SIR,—The zeal you have so uniformly shewn in the affairs of the Antiquarian Society, induces me to call your attention at this time to a point of literary history, which the examination of certain MSS. in the archives of the Society might possibly tend to elucidate.

In the year 1695, was published a folio volume of 321 pages, entitled “Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost.” The author, who modestly designates himself by his initials “P. H. φιλοσοιήτης,” was Patrick Hume, a Scotsman, of whose history the only particular known is, that he was settled as a school-master somewhere in the vicinity of London, at the time of the publication. But in his work we have abundant evidence that he was a person of considerable judgment and erudition; and from this storehouse of historical and classical illustration, ample contributions have been levied by succeeding commentators.

To this effect Mr Warton observes, that “some of his successors in the same province, apprehending no danger of detection from a work rarely inspected, and too pedantic and cumbersome to attract many readers, have been often amply indebted to the notes of Patrick Hume, without even the most distant hint or acknowledgment.” In this number the late Mr Callander of Craigforth, who published an edition, with notes, of the First Book of Paradise Lost†, has been included, and a serious charge of plagiarism

“† Milton's Paradise Lost, Book I.—Glasgow: Printed and sold by Robert and Andrew Foulis, printers to the University, M.DCC.L.” 4to. pp. 167.

brought against him by a writer, in a contemporary publication,* who considered “a plagiarism so close in its nature, yet so concealed in its origin, as worthy of notice;” and who has adduced various passages from the two commentators, to shew that Mr Callander “has, without any acknowledgment whatever, been indebted for his etymologies, his classical illustrations, his general criticisms, and, in several instances, his very language, to the older commentator, Patrick Hume.”

It may, indeed, be urged on behalf of Mr Callander, that his volume, which is anonymous, was intended to serve as a specimen of a larger work; and that, if he had received sufficient encouragement to venture on its publication, he would have then offered such acknowledgments of obligation as might have been satisfactory.

As it is certain, however, that Mr Callander actually completed his task of illustrating the *Paradise Lost*, and as, in all probability, his MSS. may have remained unexamined since the year 1781, when he presented them to the Antiquarian Society,† I would beg leave to recommend a partial examination, with the view of ascertaining whether, in any general preface, he has condescended on such acknowledgments as might tend to remove the charge of plagiarism which has been brought against him.

The letter being read, MR LAING was requested, along with Messrs MACDONALD and PITCAIRN, to examine the MSS. and to favour the Society with a report of them, to be read at their next stated Meeting.

REPORT, &c.

10th April 1826.

THE unpublished Annotations on Milton by the late Mr Callander of Craigforth, in the possession of the Society, consist of a series of notes on the second and succeeding books of *Paradise Lost*. They were presented by the author in August 1781, and form nine folio volumes or parts, with a separate in-

* In Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, No. XXIV. The author of this paper (written, I believe, by the ingenious Biographer of the Admirable Crichton and of Sir Thomas Craig) concludes with the observation, “that this now unknown and forgotten individual (Hume) deserves, in point of erudition, good taste, and richness of classical illustration, to be ranked as the father of that style of comparative criticism, which has been so much employed, during these later days, in illustrating the works of our great Poet.”

† Smellie's Account of the Institution and Progress of the Society, 1782, p. 60.

dex. Mr Callander had previously given the Society a copy of his edition, with notes, of book first of that poem, printed at Glasgow in the year 1750, 4to. On two of the MS. volumes, we observed the dates November 1748 and January 1749, but the notes appear to have been written down at various times; and, in the number of volumes specified, there is included a revised transcript, in Mr Callander's own hand, apparently with a view to publication, of the notes to book third, dated August 1751; to book fourth, dated January 1751; and to part of book fifth, without date.

As a corroborative proof of the great care and labour bestowed by Mr Callander in the illustration of *Paradise Lost*, it may be noticed, that the Reverend Mr Todd, the learned and worthy editor of Milton's poetical works, in reference to Mr Callander's publication of book first of that poem, says:—“They who are acquainted with this (anonymous) commentary will concur with me in wishing that the annotator had completed his ingenious and elaborate criticisms on the whole poem.” And he immediately adds:—“That commentator I find was Mr Callander. And, since the publication of my first edition of these volumes, I have been favoured by the learned Malcolm Laing, Esquire, with a small interleaved copy of *Paradise Lost*, containing memoranda of Mr Callander for notes on the whole poem, and a few remarks completed.” From this copy, Mr Todd has inserted occasional notes, which agree pretty closely with the larger MS. commentary in the possession of the Society, of the existence of which he appears to have been ignorant.

In the letter that I lately had the honour to submit to the Society, the chief object which I had in view, in suggesting an examination of these MSS. had reference to a charge of plagiarism made against the author; and I suggested a possibility that Mr Callander, in some general preface to his annotations, might have made such acknowledgments as would completely exonerate him from this accusation. It is to be regretted that no such preface

appears ever to have been written ; and we are left, from a general inspection of his MSS. to draw the conclusion that, in his arduous undertaking, he conceived himself perfectly justified in making free use of works already before the publick. His professed object, in the publication of the first book, was to illustrate “ the various allusions to ancient mythology, sacred or profane, which are so frequent in the first book of this divine poem. Many passages too (it is added) of the ancient poets are there remarked, of which Milton has so admirably availed himself, or, to say it more properly, which he has so thoroughly made his own.”

The parallel quotations from Hume’s and Callander’s notes adduced by the writer referred to in my former letter, are of too striking a kind to leave the least doubt of the obligations which Callander was under to his predecessor ; but, having taken occasion, since the last meeting of the Society, to form a more minute comparison of the two commentaries, it appears evident that these obligations are by no means so numerous or important as the writer of the article in question seems to have imagined. That Patrick Hume’s Annotations display great learning and ingenuity, cannot be denied ; but the opinion formed of his work by Dr Newton, afterwards Bishop of Bristol, will give the reader a more correct idea of its real merit than the high strain of panegyrick which I formerly quoted. “ As Hume was the first (says Dr N. in the preface to his edition of Milton’s Poetical Works) “ so he is the most copious annotator. He laid the foundation, but he laid it among infinite heaps of rubbish. The greater part of his work is a dull dictionary of the most common words—a tedious fardel of the most trivial observations, explaining what requires no explanation ; but, take away what is superfluous, and there will still remain a great deal that is useful. There is gold among his dross ; and I have been careful to separate the one from the other.”

Mr Callander seems to have acted precisely on this plan ; and,

whatever we may think of the total absence of any reference or acknowledgment to the labours of his predecessors, it would be unfair to consider him as a servile copier of the thoughts and words of others. But from the comparisons we have made, it is necessary to add that, if Mr Callander is to be accused of plagiarism in the case of Hume, he is not less chargeable in the case of other commentators, having acted in a precisely similar manner, and to as great an extent, with the notes of Dr Newton, and occasionally so with those of some contemporary critics.

It would have required much more time, than seemed necessary at the present moment to be devoted to such a purpose, to have enabled me to speak decidedly as to the extent of aid which Mr Callander thus obtained in his illustrations of Milton.† It

† There is a circumstance connected with the name of Milton so creditable to Mr Callander, as to render it worthy of notice on the present occasion. It is sufficiently notorious that, about the middle of the last century, a base attempt to subvert the reputation of our immortal bard was made by an ill-starred native of this country, William Lauder, who presumed to shew that Milton was “ the worst and greatest of all plagiarists,” in his having been indebted to several obscure modern Latin poets, not only for occasional passages, but for “ the substance of whole books together,” as well as for the general conception and arrangement of his *Paradise Lost*. This was done in so specious a manner (by means of interpolations either of his own fabrication, or from the Latin version of *Paradise Lost*, by Wm. Hog, printed in the year 1690) that he succeeded in imposing upon various persons of literary eminence.

The publication of Lauder’s *Essay on Milton’s Use and Imitation of the Moderns* occasioned several writers to examine his assertions, and to vindicate the reputation of the great English poet. In this number was Mr Callander, who went over the various quotations on which Lauder rests his arguments, and, by producing parallel passages from the Greek tragedians, and other ancient writers, whom Milton is more likely to have imitated, than such obscure authors as Masenius, Taubmannus, or Staphorstius, he shews plainly that Lauder must either have been actuated by malice, or had not sufficient learning to qualify him to judge of the true sources of Milton’s poetry.

But the publication of Mr Callander’s work was rendered unnecessary by the appearance of the well known tract, “ *Milton Vindicated from the Charge of Plagiarism,*” &c. by Dr Douglas, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury ; which, proceeding in a more direct

might, however, be well deserving the attention of the Society, were some gentleman, better fitted for the task, to examine more minutely these and the other MSS. presented by Mr Callander in manner, convicted him of his literary forgeries, and produced a complete detection and abject confession on the part of Lauder of his impositions on publick credulity.

The MS. of Mr Callander's work, entitled "*Vindiciæ Miltonianæ, or a Refutation of the Charges brought against Milton by William Lauder,*" 4to. pp. 68, some time ago fell accidentally into my hands. The following Preface to it will best serve to explain Mr Callander's feelings on this subject:—

"Had the ingenious Dr Douglass published that pamphlet sooner, in which he has so effectually vindicated the character of the immortal Milton, and refuted, exposed, and baffled the matchless forgeries of Lauder, the following sheets had never been written. But that worthy gentleman having deffered the publication of his piece till lately, the just indignation that arose in my breast against the scandalous attempt of our modern Zoilus prompted me immediately, and at random, to draw out the following piece, that if my weak attempts to vindicate John Milton have not all the success I meant they should, yet this may remain a monument of the regard and honour the writer bears to the memory of our English Homer.

"After three or four days writing, the following pamphlet was finished, being chiefly extracted from these notes I have long ago prepared upon the Paradise Lost, part of which are already in the eye of the Publick. While I was deliberating whether I should trouble the world with such an unformed production, the Vindication of Milton was published by Mr Douglass. On reading this pamphlet, I found I had nothing further to do but to congratulate the *manes* of Milton on their having found so just and intelligent an assertor of their hitherto unsullied reputation, and to enjoy in secret the pleasure that results to the generous Soul on seeing truth and virtue triumphant, malice and calumny put to flight, and innocence protected.

"Unluckily, not knowing the mean character of Lauder, I took for granted that all his quotations were just; and, proceeding upon this supposition (especially as I had almost none of the obscure authors quoted by our critick at hand) I indeavoured to justify Milton upon quite another plan than that followed by Mr Douglass. My success has been answerable to the disadvantages I laboured under; while, instead of removing real objections, it is found that I have been only combating a phantom of Mr Lauder's raising, and vindicating Milton, while he stood in no need of any apology to clear his fame. Mr Lauder had already imposed upon so many people of distinguished taste and learning, that it is no shame to me to be of the number of the deceived; but it may be thought that I possess at least this small advantage over some of them, that I did all in my little power to examine and bring to light whatever might serve to establish the reputation, and honour the memory of John Milton."

"JO. CALLANDER."

to this Society,† of which he was one of the earliest members. His attainments in classical, oriental, and northern literature, at a time when these were but little cultivated in this country, merit a permanent memorial; although his most important labours have in some respects been left in a state unfit for publication. I shall only farther observe that, whatever opinion may be entertained of the strict propriety of the method pursued in compiling these extensive and elaborate annotations, the inspection of them cannot fail to impress the mind with a high sense of the erudition and judgment evinced by Mr Callander, and to call forth unqualified praise at so laborious an attempt to illustrate one of the noblest monuments of human genius.

DAVID LAING.

While this sheet is at press, I am favoured by Dr Robert Anderson with the perusal of several letters, addressed to the Earl of Buchan, by Mr Callander, in which he congratulates his Lordship on 'establishing a Society for promoting the study of the

† These consist of Notes on Musæus, and five large volumes entitled "*Spicilegia Antiquitatis Græcæ, sive ex Veteribus Poetis Deperdita Fragmenta. Collecta a J.[oh.] C.[allander] D.[e] C.[raigforth] A.[rmigero.]*"

Besides his papers in the Antiquarian Society Transactions, Mr Callander is known to have published the following works:—(1.) *Terra Australis Cognita, or Voyages to the Terra Australis, or Southern Hemisphere, during the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries, (translated from the French of De Brosses.)* Edinburgh, 1766, 3 vols. 8vo. (2.) *Essay towards a literal English Version of the New Testament, in the Epistle to the Ephesians.* Glasgow, 1779, 4to. (3.) *Two Ancient Scottish Poems; The Gaberlunzie Man and Christ's Kirk on the Green; with Notes and Observations.* Edinburgh, 1782, 8vo. (4.) *Specimen of a Bibliotheca Septentrionalis.* Edinburgh, 1778, folio. (5.) *Proposals for a History of the Ancient Musick of Scotland from the age of the venerable Ossian to the beginning of the 16th century.* Edinburgh, 1781, 4to. (6.) *Specimen of a Scoto-Gothic Glossary, 1781 (mentioned in a letter to the Earl of Buchan.)*

‘ history, language, and antiquities of our native country’—and alluding to the various works which had employed his leisure hours, he expresses his satisfaction ‘ that he was the person first called to the honour of being one of the Antiquarian Society.’ ‘ Though I willingly yield my small usefulness (he says) to any one member of the community, yet I must be permitted to assert that, in zeal for the glory and interest of the Society, I will not give way to any person whatever.’ On the back of one of these letters, the Earl of Buchan writes ‘ Callander of Craigforth—a gentleman of uncommon erudition, skilful in music, and a great performer on the violin. He gave to the Society of Antiquaries his learned and copious notes on Milton’s Paradise Lost.’

The following letter to his Lordship accompanied the donation of the MSS. referred to in the preceding report :—

MY LORD,—I humbly request the favour of your Lordship, and of the Society over which you so worthily preside, that they will shelter, in some corner of their library, the two works in MS. which will be presented with this letter. The one is a complete commentary on the Paradise Lost, in nine thin volumes in folio, the labour of many of the best years of my life. The first book of this Commentary was formerly printed by Foulis at Glasgow in the year 1750 ; and I did myself the honour to present a copy of it to the Society some months ago. To this collection is now added a copious index in a small volume, referring to the *persons, matters, and poetical allusions* contained in the Commentary, and illustrated in it to a very considerable length, by large collections from these authors, who furnished Milton with that copious store of ideas he so happily used in his Immortal Poem.

The other MS. which I wish to deposit in the library of the Society, is a collection of the *Fragmenta Poetarum Græcorum Deperditorum*. This work is contained in four volumes, in large folio, to which is added another smaller volume, in which are some notes on these relicks of the Ancient Grecian Poetry. There is also another volume in small quarto, containing the names of three hundred and twenty-one poets, whose entire works are now totally lost, but whose fragments, the *Disjecta Membra Poetarum*, I have collected from the scholiasts, grammarians, and lexicographers of the Greeks, in whose books they are occasionally cited.

These two works formed great part of my studies while health and leisure were given. But now bending under the weight of sixty winters, and covered with grey hairs, I can no longer flatter myself with the hopes I once indulged of giving them those finishing

touches, which might render them fit for publick inspection. I, therefore, bequeathe them to the Honourable Society of Antiquaries for Scotland, hoping that,

Oriare forsan nostris ex ossibus scriptor,

some Member of the Society, at a future period, may chance to turn his thoughts on such subjects as formerly occupied mine. Should this happen, he will find ample materials collected, out of which a more perfect work may be formed, than my slender abilities would have produced.

Whatever spare hours may yet be given me by indulgent Heaven, will be devoted to those pursuits that more immediately concern the history, language, and antiquities of our own Country ; and to approve myself not entirely unworthy of the distinguished honours the Society hath been pleased to confer on the most unworthy of their Associates.—I have the honour to be, with the most perfect gratitude and regard, my Lord, your Lordship’s most faithful and most obedient humble servant,

JO. CALLANDER.

Craigforth, August 6. 1781.

Mr Callander died at Craigforth, September 14. 1789.