XXIII.—Notices of the Life of William Hamilton, of Bangour, Esq.; and a Chronological List of his Poems.


[Read to the Society, 11th February 1828.]

A small copper-plate engraving of Hamilton of Bangour, the celebrated poet, by Mr (afterwards Sir Robert) Strange, was presented to the Society by the Earl of Buchan, 19th February 1782. This portrait, differing from an earlier engraving, also by Strange, prefixed to some copies of Hamilton's Poems, had been thrown aside and neglected, until the removal of the Society's Museum to the New Buildings; and it was thought that the best mode of preserving it would be, to have impressions thrown off, and inserted in one of the volumes of the Society's Transactions. In this view I undertook to apply to my friend, Mr James Chalmers of London, for some notices of the Poet's life and writings, and, in particular, for a list of poems by Hamilton, contained in an original manuscript volume which I had seen in the library of his uncle, the late George Chalmers, Esq. author of Caledonia.

'About Hamilton of Bangour,' Mr Chalmers writes, 'I feel every possible disposition to communicate to you every thing in my power.—Near 30 years ago I got several notices of Hamilton from his friend and countryman, old Mr Andrew Lumisden, a native of Edinburgh (the author of Remarks on the Antiquities of Rome, published in 1797) who knew him at Rome, where they both were in exile after the Rebellion, for which Lumisden was attainted. When my late uncle obtained the MS. volume of Hamilton's poems, our attention was more particularly excited to the Author, with the view of publishing a small impression, either of the whole of his Poems, or only those of the MS., to form a small volume of the same size, similar to the edition of his Poems 1760, with a biographical account prefixed. Mr Lumisden going on a visit to his native place, in 1801, engaged to make inquiries, and collect what notices he could about Hamilton; but he was unfortunately taken ill, and died in the house of his old friend John Maagowan, at Edinburgh, (26th December 1801, at the age of 81) and the project of printing Hamilton's Poems was dropped. Your letter brought my mind upon the subject; and, by the help of some notices obtained formerly, and a number of jottings referring to the proper sources (many of which were made with a view to the printing...'

Vol. III.
of his Poems) I have raked together everything that I can find about Hamilton and his Poems; and I send you the whole enclosed, with a list of the pieces in the MS. I have put down a great deal more than you may probably want, as, not knowing exactly the scope you may be inclined to take in your intended Article, I thought it best to put all before you; and you can use as much or as little as you think proper.

The engraving is from an original Picture painted at Rome about the year 1748, and presented by the Poet to his friend Sir Stuart Thriepland, Baronet. On the back of the Picture are the following lines by Hamilton, ‘Written at Rouen, in France, in the third year of our exile, 1749—'

HAIL, Wallace! gen’rous Chief! who singly brave,
When all were trembling round, aspir’d to save:
Hail, Bruce! intrepid King! beset with foes,
Who, from defeat, to fame and empire rose:
Hail, Stuart! much suffring Youth!—yes! I foresee
Imperial crowns and certain palms for thee.

The original portrait is now in the possession of Sir Peter Murray Thriepland, of Fingask Castle, Baronet.—Respecting the Poet himself, there is no necessity of adding any thing to the minute and interesting particulars furnished by Mr Chalmers. Hamilton will be remembered as a poet of great elegance and refined taste, who has embalmed in his verses the recollections of many persons of distinction and beauty with whom he associated: but it must be confessed, that Hamilton’s verses bear stronger traces of art than of nature. Yet some of his lyric pieces—his ‘Bray of Yarrow’—the ‘Flower of Yarrow’—and ‘Ah, the Shepherd’s Mourful Fate!’—will always secure to him a place of distinction among the Lyric Poets of the last Century.

9th February 1828. D. L.
copies distributed soon after the battle; and it was set to music by Macgibbon.

His triumph was soon damped by a domestic calamity, the loss of his wife, who died in October 1745, leaving him an only son. This melancholy event, which he deplored in an epitaph on her, (Poems, 1760, p. 91.) probably prevented him from engaging more actively in the Rebellion.

At the critical period of the Rebellion, early in 1746, (a) he appears to have written the 'Soliloquy in imitation of Hamlet,' which was printed anonymously in the Scots Mag. June 1746, p. 268, and reprinted in the several editions of his Poems.

His Jacobite hopes were extinguished by the decisive battle of Culloden, 16th April 1746; after which he lurked for some time in the Highlands, where he suffered much discomfort, personal and mental; and he gave vent to his feelings in 'A Soliloquy, wrote in June 1746.' (Poems, 1760, p. 98.)

At length he found means to escape to France; and he continued an exile three years, residing chiefly in France and Italy (b). As he avoided meddling in any of the intrigues of the Jacobites while abroad, he was enabled, in 1749, to make his peace with the government, and to return to Scotland. In the following year, 1750, he got possession of the family property which had devolved to him on the death of his elder, and only, brother, John Hamilton of Bangour, Esq., who died a bachelor, at Ninewar, in East Lothian, on the 8th of May 1750. (Scots Mag. 1750, p. 206.)

In the winter of 1750, (c) and spring of 1751, he appears to have been resident at Edinburgh, still a widower; and, in March 1751, speaks of himself as the rejected lover of some foreign lady, whom he calls Laura (e).

Our Poet afterwards married a second wife; but at what time, and of what name or family she was, I have not been able to ascertain. She survived him 25 years, and died at her house in the Canongate, on the 5th September 1779. (Scots Mag. 1779, p. 510.)

Being of a delicate constitution, Hamilton's health was greatly impaired in his latter years; and he again went abroad in hopes of benefit from a warmer climate. But this had not the desired effect; and he died at Lyons on the 25th March 1754, in the 50th year of his age. (Scots Mag. 1754, p. 155.) His corpse was brought to Scotland, and interred in the Abbey church of Holyroodhouse.

He left an only son, James Hamilton (by his first wife) who was then about ten years old, and who inherited his property. This son, James Hamilton of Bangour, married, in August 1770, Miss Peggy Bruce, (Scots Mag. 1770, p. 457) by whom he had several children, and he died on the 18th of October 1814 (b).

Our Poet had a thin visage, and a long neck. The portrait of him prefixed to his Poems, Edinburgh, 1760, 8vo. was engraved by
Sir Robert Strange (a), from a drawing by Gavin Hamilton (b), when he was at Rome. It is very like—only that the Painter has omitted a small dint on the top of the nose, near the point.

For the character of Hamilton as a poet and a gentleman, see the Scots Mag. 1754, p. 155; the Biographical Preface to the posthumous edition of his Poems, 8vo. Edin. 1760; Dr Anderson's British Poets, vol. ix. p. 412; Mr A. Chalmers' English Poets, vol. xv. p. 591; and particularly Lord Woodhouselee's Life of Lord Kames, vol. i. p. 64-70, where he illustrates a prominent portrait of him, which brought the young artist into notice. He afterwards removed to the 5th of July 1792.

After leaving Italy, he resided several years at Paris, where he was highly esteemed as an Engraver. From Paris he returned to London, where he resided for some time at Great Queen Street, Westminster. He died at London on the 5th of July 1792.

(a) Robert Strange was bred an Engraver, at Edinburgh, by Mr Richard Cooper, with whom he served an apprenticeship; and he began business for himself in the Scotch Capital. In 1745 he was appointed Engraver to the Young Pretender, and engraved a portrait of him, which brought the young artist into notice. He afterwards removed to London, where he became distinguished in his profession. In 1759 he went to Italy, where he resided for some time at Rome, and collected a number of pictures, of which he afterwards published a 'Catalogue raisonne.' After leaving Italy, he resided several years at Paris, where he was highly esteemed as an Engraver. From Paris he returned to London, where he attained great celebrity in his profession; and George III., who patronised the arts, conferred the honour of Knighthood on him, the 5th of January 1787, at which time he resided in Great Queen Street, Westminster. He died at London on the 5th of July 1792.

(b) Gavin Hamilton was a younger son of a respectable family in Lanarkshire. Having gone to Italy for improvement in his profession, he settled at Rome, where he became celebrated as an historical painter; and he continued to reside there during the greater part of his life. In 1783, he succeeded to a considerable family estate in Lanarkshire, by the death of his elder brother, Alexander Inglis Hamilton, of Murdieston, Esq. on the 6th of May in that year. (Scots Mag. 1783, p. 279.)

(c) The following extract is the passage to which Mr Chalmers refers in the Life of Lord Kames:—With the elegant and accomplished William Hamilton of Bangour, whose amiable manners were long remembered with the tenderest recollection by all who knew him, Mr Home lived in the closest habits of friendship. The writer of these Memoirs has heard him dwell with delight on the scenes of their youthful days; and he has to regret that many an anecdote to which he listened with pleasure was not committed to a better record than a treacherous memory. Hamilton's mind is pictured in his verses. They are the easy and careless effusions of an elegant fancy and a chastened taste; and the sentiments they convey are the genuine feelings of a tender and susceptible heart perpetually owned the dominion of some favourite mistress; but this love passion generally evaporated in song.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF POEMS BY HAMILTON, AND THE DATES OF THEIR PUBLICATION AS FAR AS HAS BEEN ASCERTAINED.

1724. 'To Mrs S. H. on her taking something ill I said.' To the tune of Hallowe'en. Tea Table Miscellany, Part i. 1724, p. 23. Reprinted in his Poems, 1748, p. 60; and 1760, p. 52.

— 'Upon hearing his picture was in Chloe's breast.' To the tune of The Fourteen of October. Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part i. p. 29. Reprinted in his Poems, 1748, p. 62; and 1760, p. 54.

— Song.—'Ye shepherds and nymphs that adorn the gay plain.' To the tune of The Yellow Hair'd Laddie. Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part i. p. 90. Reprinted in his Poems, 1748, p. 64; and 1760, p. 58.

— Song.—'Ah the Shepherd's mournful fate.' To the tune of Gallowshields. Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part i. Poems, 1748, p. 65; and 1760, p. 59.

— Horace, Book i. Ode 11, to W. D.' Tune—Willie was a wanton wag. Begins, 'Willy, we're inquire what end.' Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii. It was reprinted in Hamilton's Poems, 1748, 1749, and 1758; and there is an alteration of it addressed to Miss Erskine in his Poems, 1760, p. 133.

— Song.—'Adieu ye pleasant sports and plays.' Tune—Woe's my heart that we should sunder. Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii. Poems, 1748, p. 66; and 1760, p. 60.

— Ode to Mrs A. R. 'Tune of Love's Goddess in a Myrtle Grove.—1st line, 'Now Spring begins her smiling round.' Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii. It was reprinted in his Poems, 1748, 1749, and 1758; and there is an alteration of it addressed to Miss Erskine in his Poems, 1760, p. 133.

— The Braes of Yarrow. 'Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bride.' Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii. Poems, 1748, p. 46; and 1760, p. 67, somewhat altered.

— 'Now Spring begins her smiling round.' Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii. Poems, 1748, p. 66; and 1760, p. 60.

Lord Woodhouselee is mistaken in saying (p. 69) that Hamilton's friend William Crawford was the author of Tweedside. It was Robert Crawford who was the author of Tweedside, and of several other beautiful songs which first appeared in Ramsay's Tea Table Miscellany.
LIFE AND WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAMILTON.

1725. A Poem, 'To the Countess of Eglintoun, with Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd, 1725.' This was prefixed anonymously to the 1st and 2d editions of the Gentle Shepherd in 1725 and 1726, and to the subsequent editions. It was reprinted in the several editions of Hamilton's Poems.


1727. 'Epitaph on Sir James Suttie of Balgone, in East Lothian, died 4th May 1736.

1733. 'Epitaph on Lord Binny' (written in January 1733). Poems, 1748, p. 100. Sir Walter Pringle, a Lord of Session, with the title of Newhall, was promoted to the Bench in 1718, and died 14th December 1736.

1733. 'Epitaph on Mr Baillie of Jerviswood.' Poems 1760, p. 209. George Baillie of Jerviswood, Esq. died at Oxford 6th August 1736, aged 75.

1739. 'Contemplation, or the Triumph of Love.' This was written in, or before 1739, when he submitted it to the critical examination of his friends, Home, and W. Crawford, (see Lord Woodhouselee's Mem. of Lord Kames, i. 69). It appeared to be, as Lord W. intimates, the most laboured of all Hamilton's Poems, and was much altered. It was published alone, and anonymous, at Edinburgh 1747, 8vo. price 4d. (Scots Mag. February 1747, p. 100.) It was reprinted in the several editions of his Poems, and there were prefixed to it verses 'To a young lady, with the following Poem,' which are not in the above edition of 1747.

1739. 'Three Odes; to which is added the Miss and the Butterfly, a Fable, in the manner of the late Mr Gay.' (anonymous). Edinburgh, 1739, 8vo. pp. 28. These were afterwards reprinted in the several editions of Hamilton's Poems. See Ode i. to Fancy in Poems 1760, p. 29; Ode ii. and Ode iii. in 1b. p. 35 and 38; and Miss and the Butterfly, 1b. p. 48.

1739. 'Ode on the New Year, 1739.' Printed anonymously in the Scots Mag. Decem. 1739, p. 620. The Author was then abroad; and this Ode was sent to the Magazine from Glasgow, probably by his friend Mr Will. Crawford. It was reprinted in the several editions of Hamilton's Poems.

1741. 'Epitaph on Mrs Keith.' (Margaret Cunningham, the wife of Robert Keith of Craige, Esq. who died inchild-bed, 12th January 1741). It was printed anonymously in the Scots Mag. May 1741, p. 212; and reprinted in the several editions of Hamilton's Poems.

1742. 'Epitaph on Mrs Hepburn.' (The wife of William Hepburn of Haudo, Esq. who died in July 1742, in her 17th year. It was printed anonymously in the Scots Mag. August 1742, p. 360; and reprinted in the several editions of Hamilton's Poems.

1742. 'Epitaph on Mr Basil Hamilton.' (Basil Hamilton of Baldoon, Esq. M. P. for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, who died in Novem. 1742). Written in Dec. 1742. Twenty-four lines in the MS. vol. of his Poems. Only the first six lines were printed in the edition of Hamilton's Poems, 1760, p. 269.

1745. 'Ode on the Battle of Gladsmuir, 1745,' (21st Sept.) This was printed, and some copies distributed soon after the Battle; and it was set to music by Macgibbon. This Ode was not included in any edition of Hamilton's Poems from 1748 to 1750; but it was reprinted in the Edin. Mag. and Review, 1773, vol. i. p. 139; and from that in the Scots Mag. Decem. 1775, p. 659; and again reprinted with Hamilton's Poems in the British Poets, by Dr Anderson, vol. ix. p. 482.


1746. 'A Soliloquy wrote in June 1746.' Printed in the several editions of Hamilton's Poems.

1746. 'Poems on several occasions.—Glasgow, printed and sold by Rob. and Andrew Foulis, 1746.' Small 8vo. pp. 148, besides 3 leaves prefixed. This is an exact reprint of the preceding, and contains the same number of pages. Though certainly a reprint, it is not called a second edition. A subsequent reprint by the same printers is called 'The second edition.' To my copy of this, in 1749, there is prefixed an anonymous head of the Author, engraved from the portrait by Gavin Hamilton at Rome, before noticed; but here the face is turned a different way (looking from the title page) from that prefixed to the edition 1760, which looks towards the title page.

1746. 'Poems on several occasions.—Glasgow, printed, and sold by Rob. and Andrew Foulis, 1746.' Small 8vo. pp. 148, besides 3 leaves prefixed. This was printed anonymously, while the Author was abroad; and the Preface, which is dated 'Glasgow, December 21. 1746,' was written by Dr Adam Smith. The volume contains 29 pieces, of which 17 are marked as having never been printed before.

1747. 'Poems on several occasions.—Glasgow, printed, and sold by Rob. and Andrew Foulis, 1748.' Small 8vo. pp. 148, besides 3 leaves prefixed. This edition was printed anonymously, while the Author was abroad; and the Preface, which is dated 'Glasgow, December 21. 1748,' was written by Dr Adam Smith. The volume contains 29 pieces, of which 17 are marked as having never been printed before.

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Glasgow, printed and sold by Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1762. Small 8vo. pp. 146, besides 4 leaves prefatory. This is an exact reprint of the preceding in 1748 and 1769, and contains the same number of pages, with an additional dedication-leaf prefixed, but has no portrait. The author having died in 1754, his name was now inserted in the title-page; and a dedication prefixed "To the memory of Mr William Crawford, merchant in Glasgow, the friend of Mr Hamilton," 11 pages.

1760. 'Poems on several occasions. By William Hamilton, of Bangour, Esquire. Edinburgh, printed for W. Gordon, 1760, 8vo. pp. x. and 262.' There is prefixed a portrait of the Author, engraved by Sir Robert Strange, from a drawing by Gavin Hamilton, when at Rome. There is also prefixed an address 'to the Reader,' giving a short biographical account of the author. This was written by David Rae, Esq. Advocate, who was promoted to the Bench in 1782, and took the title of Lord Eskgrove; was made Lord Justice-Clerk in 1799, and died 23d October 1804, in his 80th year. The volume contains 88 pieces, (one of which, p. 222, is omitted in the table of contents,) and is the best, and standard edition of Hamilton's Poems. Soon after the publication, the volume was reviewed by a jaundiced critic in the Monthly Review for February 1761; which produced a good answer (probably by Mr Rae) entitled 'The Monthly Reviewers Reviewed, in their character of Mr Hamilton of Bangour's Poems.' This was published in the Edinburgh Magazine, April 1761, p. 222; and in the Scots Magazine, May 1761, p. 260.

1794. Of the more recent publication of Hamilton's Poems, it is sufficient to notice with intimations of such as have been printed; but nearly all those which have been printed differ, and some very materially, from the MS.

2. 'The Episode of Lausus and Mezentius, translated from the 10th Book of Virgil's Eneid.' (Poems, 1760, p. 196.)
3. 'To a Gentleman going to travel.' (Poems, 1760, p. 227.)
4. 'Horace, Ode 5, Book I. Imitated.' (Poems, 1760, p. 127.)
5. 'Palinode.' (Poems, 1760, p. 128.)
6. 'Horace, Ode 7, Book I. Imitated. To the Earl of Stair.' (Poems, 1760, p. 130.)
7. 'Horace, Ode 11, Book I. Imitated. To Miss Erskine.' (Ib. p. 133.) This poem is altered from an imitation of the same Ode, addressed to W. D. by Hamilton, printed in Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii. and in Poems, 1748, p. 116.
8. 'Horace, Ode 20, Book I. Imitated. To Miss Dalrymple.' (Poems, 1748, p. 118; and 1760, p. 136.)
9. 'Horace, Ode 33, Book I. Imitated. To a Gentleman in love.' (Poems, 1760, p. 141.)
10. 'To Lady Mary Montgomery.' (Poems, 1760, p. 237.)
11. 'On seeing Lady Mary Montgomery sit to her picture. In Imitation of Spenser's Style.' (Poems, 1748, p. 20; and 1760, p. 46.)
12. 'To Mrs A. R.' (Tea Table Misc. 1724, Part ii.; and in Poems, 1760, p. 222.)
13. 'To H. H. in the Assembly.' (Poems, 1760, p. 225.)
14. 'To the Countess of Eglintoun, with A. Ramsey's Gentle Shepherd.' (Prefixed to the Gentle Shepherd 1722 and 1726, and subsequent editions: and printed in Poems, 1746, p. 40; and 1760, p. 23; but all differ from the MS.)
15. 'Horace, Ode 22, Book I. Imitated. To R. S.' (Poems, 1760, p. 134, differs.)
16. 'Horace, Ode 22, Book I. Imitated. To his Lyre.' (Ib. p. 140.)
17. 'Horace, Ode 21, Book III. Imitated. To a Cask of Twenty-year-old Beer.' (Not printed.)
18. 'Anacreon, Ode 13, Imitated. To a Swallow.' (Poems, 1760, p. 211.)
19. 'Horace, Ode 9, Imitated. To a Dove.' (Ib. p. 212.)
20. 'Ode. To Fancy.' (Poems, 1748, p. 21; and 1760, p. 29; but differs greatly from the MS.)
21. 'Ode.' (Poems, 1748, p. 29; and 1760, p. 29; but differs greatly from the MS.)
22. 'Ode to Contemplation.' (Printed in a separate form in 1747, 8vo.; and in Poems, 1748, p. 4; and 1760, p. 4. Both differ greatly from the MS. and from one another.)
23. 'Horace, Ode 16, Book II. Imitated. To the Earl of Marchmont.' (Poems, 1760, p. 146; but differs from the MS.)
24. 'Anacreon, Ode 20 Imitated.' (Poems, 1760, p. 213, called 'Ode 19.')
25. 'Horace, Ode 21 Imitated.' (Ib. p. 214.)
26. 'Horace, Ode 22 Imitated.' (Ib. p. 214.)
27. 'Love turn'd to Despair.' (Ib. p. 216.)
28. 'Latin Inscription.' (At Moffat. Not printed.)
29. 'Latin Inscription.' (Do.)
30. 'Latin Inscription.' (Do.)
31. 'Latin Epitaph for a Dog.' (Not printed.)
32. 'The Brave of Yarrow.' To Lady Jane Home. (Tea-Table Misc. 1724, Part ii.; Poems, 1748, p. 46; and 1760, p. 67, but altered.)
33. 'On the death of Basil Hamilton.' 1742, 24 lines. (The first six lines printed in Poems 1760, p. 299.)
34. 'The Flower of Yarrow.' To Lady Mary Montgomery. (Poems, 1748, p. 68; and 1760, p. 73.)
35. 'Speech of Randolph.' Bruce, Book 9th. (Poems, 1748, p. 97; and 1760, p. 116.)
36. 'The Flowers; a Poem.' (The Flowers; a Fragment. Poems, 1748, p. 74; and 1760, p. 103.)
37. 'The Episode of the Thistle. Flowers, Book 1st.' (Poems, 1748, p. 76; and 1760, p. 105.)
38. 'The Doves; a Poem.' (The Doves; a Fragment, Poems, 1748, p. 72; and 1760, p. 101.)
39. 'The Miss and the Butterfly.' (Printed in 1739, 8vo.; and in Poems, 1748, p. 54; and 1760, p. 48.)
40. 'Interview of Miss Dalrymple and Miss Suttles between the Pillars at the Edinburgh Assembly.' (Not printed.)
41. 'Beginning of the 1st Epistle, Book 1st of Horace, Imitated.' (Not printed.)
42. 'Beginning of the first Georgick, translated at Glasgow, in January 1746.' (Not printed.)
43. 'First Olympic Ode of Pindar translated.' (Poems, 1760, p. 169, but differs very considerably.)
44. 'Second Do. Do.' (Ib. p. 179, differs.)
45. 'The Maid of Gallowshields. In Twelve Books.' Book I. And
46. 'Ditto, Book II.' (Imperfect.) Written in 1726. (25 pages not printed. But see an account and specimen of this unfinished poem in Leyden's Preliminary to his republication of the Complaynt of Scotland, pp. 147–9.)
47. 'Horace, Ode 17, Book 2d, Imitated. Inscribed to Mr James Craig.' (Not printed.)
48. 'Verses to be put beneath Mrs C. of C——'s Picture.' (Poems, 1760, p. 215, without any title.)

XXIV.—List of Works respecting the Islands of Orkney and Shetland, forming a series of Donations to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, by 'A. Z.; a Gentleman resident in London, and an Honorary Member of the Society.

PRESENTED 23d August 1803.

I. A large volume, in folio, of Charts, containing,—
4. The name improved, &c. 1794.

II. Orcades, seu Rerum Orcadensium Historiae Libri Tres, auctore Thormodo Torfaeo. Haviniae, 1715, folio.
This is not a second edition of the work, but only the original impression of 1697, with a new title page.


IV. Collections concerning the Norwegian History of Orkney, in 1 vol. 4to. partly printed. This volume contains,—
1. Extracts from Pinkerton's Early History of Scotland, 1799; and Supplement from Mr Campbell's Political Survey of Britain, 1775.
2. Extracts from the Reverend Alexander Pope's translation of Torfaus's Orcades, (being the Appendix to Cordier's Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, 1780); with an Appendix in M.S.