ſelection of ſuch as would ſerve to ſupport and increaſe his well earned reputation as the Restorer of an­cient Geometry.

We have been thus particular in our account of Dr Simſon’s labours in theſe works, becauſe his manner of execution, while it does honour to his inventive pow­ers, and ſhows his juſt taſte in mathematical compoſition, alſo confirms our former aſſertion, that he carried his reſpect for the ancient geometers to a degree of ſuperſtitious idolatry, and that his fancy, unchecked, viewed them as incapable of error or imperfection. This is diſtinctly to be ſeen in the emendations which he has given of the texts, particularly in his editions of Euclid. Not only every imperfection of the read­ing is aſcribed to the ignorance of copyiſts, and every indiſtinctneſs in the conception, inconcluſiveneſs in the reasoning, and defect in the method, is aſcribed to the ignorance or miſtake of the commentators ; but it is all along aſſumed that the work was perfect in its kind ; and that by exhibiting a perfect work, we reſtore the genuine original. This is ſurely gratuitous ; and it is very poſſible that it has, in ſome inſtances, made Dr Simſon fail of his anxious purpoſe, and give us even a better than the original. It has undoubtedly made him fail in what *ſhould have been* his great purpoſe, viz. to give the world a connected ſyſtem of the ancient geometrical analyſis ; ſuch as would, in the firſt place, exhibit it in its moſt engaging form, elegant, perſpicuous, and comprehenſive ; and, in the next place, ſuch as ſhould engage the mathematicians of the preſent age to adopt it as the moſt certain and ſucceſsful conduc­tor in thoſe laborious and difficult reſearches in which the demands of modern ſcience continually engage them. And this might have been expected, in the pro­vince of ſpeculative geometry at leaſt, from a perſon of ſuch extenſive knowledge of the properties of figure, and who had ſo eminently ſucceeded in the many trials which he had made of its powers. We might have ex­pected that he would at leaſt have exhibited in one ſyſtematic point of view, what the ancients had done in ſeveral detached branches of the ſcience, and how far they had proceeded in the ſolution of the ſeveral ſucceſſive claſſes of problems ; and we might have hoped, that he would have inſtructed us in what manner we ſhould apply that method to the ſolution of problems oſ a more elevated kind, daily preſented to us in the queſtions of physico-mathematical ſcience. By this he would have acquired diſtinguiſhed honour, and ſcience would have received the moſt valuable improvement. But Dr Simſon has done little of all this ; and we can­not ſay that great helps have been derived from his la­bours by the eminent mathematicians of this age, who are ſucceſsfully occupied in advancing our knowledge of nature, or in improving the arts of life. He has in­deed contributed greatly to the entertainment of the ſpeculative mathematician, who is more delighted with the conſcious exerciſe of his own reaſoning powers, than with the final reſult of his reſearches. Yet we are not even certain that Dr Simſon has done this to the ex­tent he wiſhed and hoped. He has not engaged the liking of mathematicians to this analyſis, by preſenting it in the moſt agreeable form. His own extreme an­xiety to tread in the very footſteps of the original au­thors, has, in a thouſand inſtances, precluded him from uſing his own extenſive knowledge, that he might not

employ principles which were not of a claſs inferior to that of the question in hand. Thus, of neceſſity, did the method appear trammelled. We are deterred from employing a proceſs which appears to reſtrain us in the application of the knowledge which we have already acquired ; and, diſguſted with the tedious, and perhaps indirect path, by which we muſt arrive at an object which we ſee clearly over the hedge, and which we could reach by a few ſteps, of the ſecurity of which we are otherwiſe perfectly aſſured. Theſe prepoſſeſſions are indeed founded on miſtake ; but the miſtake is ſuch, that all fall into it, till experience has enlarged their views. This circumſtance alone has hitherto pre­vented mathematicians from acquiring that knowledge of the ancient analyſis which would enable them to pro­ceed in their reſearches with certainty, diſpatch, and delight. It is therefore deeply to be regretted, that this eminent genius has occupied, in this ſuperſtitious palaeology, a long and busy life, which might have been employed in original works of infinite advantage to the world, and honour to himſelf.

Our readers will, it is hoped, consider theſe obſervations as of general ſcientific importance, and as inti­mately connected with the hiſtory of mathematics ; and therefore as not improperly introduced in the biogra­phical account of one of the moſt eminent writers on this ſcience. Dr Simſon claimed our notice as a ma­thematician ; and his affectionate admiration of the an­cient analyſis is the prominent feature of his literary character. By this he is known all over Europe ; and his name is never mentioned by any foreign author with­out ſome very honourable allusion to his diſtinguiſhed geometrical elegance and ſkill. Dr James Moor, profeſſor of Greek in the univerſity of Glaſgow, no leſs eminent for his knowledge in ancient geometry than for his profeſſional talents, put the following appoſite inſcription below a portrait of Dr Simſon :

Geometriam, sub Tyranno barbaro sæva

Servitute diu squalentem, in Libertatem

Et decus antiquum vindicavit

Unus.

Yet it muſt not be underſtood that Dr Simſon’s pre­dilection for the geometrical analyſis of the ancients did ſo far miſlead him as to make him neglect the ſymbolical analyſis of the preſent times ; on the contrary, he was completely matter of it, as has been already obſerved, and frequently employed it. In his academical lectures to the ſtudents of his upper claſſes, he uſed to point out its proper province (which he by no means li­mited by a ſcanty boundary), and in what caſes it might be applied with ſafety and advantage even to queſtions of pure geometry. He once honoured the writer of this article with the sight of a very ſhort diſſertation on this ſubject (perhaps the one referred to in the preface to his Conic Sections). In this piece he was perhaps more liberal than the moſt zealous partiſans of the ſymbolical analyſis could desire, admitting as a ſufficient equation

*of* the Conic Sections L = p2c/x2 where L is the *latus X*

*rectum, X* is the diſtance of any point of the curve from the focus, *p* is the perpendicular drawn from the focus to the tangent in the given point, and *c* is the chord of the equicurve circle drawn thro’ the focus. Unfortu­nately this diſſertation was not found among his pa-