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The Works Of Mr. George Lillo; With Some Account Of His Life

Containing, *Silvia; or, The Country Burial. A Ballad Opera.* *George Barnwell, A Tragedy.* *The Life of Scanderbeg.* And *The Christian Hero, A Tragedy*

Lillo, George

London, 1775

To David Garrick, Esq;

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T O

DAVID GARRICK, Esq;

S I R,

PERMIT me to claim your patronage for the works of GEORGE LILLO, an author whose dramatic scenes are rich in plain sense and strong passion, in truth of character and sound moral.

The world is indebted to this writer for the invention of a new species of dramatic poetry, which may properly be termed the inferior or lesser tragedy.

Otway, Southern and Rowe had indeed taught the Tragic Muse a softer tone, and had lowered the buskin, to adapt it to characters beneath the rank of Kings, and Demigods; but still the persons of their

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Dramas,



DEDICATION.

Dramas, though less illustrious, were of the noble and elevated order: LILLO formed his plots from private histories, and his characters seldom rose higher than the middle class of life.

In justification of his attempt to make Tragedy of more general use, LILLO * has observed, “ that this species of Dramatic Poetry is so far from losing its dignity by being accommodated to the circumstances of the generality of mankind, that it is more truly august in proportion to the extent of its influence, and the number that is properly affected by it, as it is more truly great to be the instrument of good to many who stand in need of our assistance, than to a very small part of that number.”

I have no doubt of your being convinced of the utility of this lower kind of Tragedy, as you have established the strength of LILLO's argument by your own practice.

* Dedication to BARNWELL.



DEDICATION.

practice. The encouragement you gave to More's tragedy of the Gamester will be an acknowledged proof of what I assert, and I have reason to believe that some successful scenes in that pathetic play were indebted to you for more than their representation.

It was the misfortune of LILLO to compose many of his plays during a period when the stage was governed by two managers of very opposite taste, but equally inconsistent in their conduct with the interest of authors and actors, and the reasonable entertainment of the public.

The one, it is said, had early imbibed a strange dislike to plays and players; either from some particular prejudices which cannot now be easily ascertained, or, which is more probable, from an uncommon fondness for an exotic species of Theatrical entertainment, called Pantomime. It is confessed that he carried this excrecence of the stage to its utmost perfection,



DEDICATION.

fection, and was universally esteemed a most excellent performer in the mummings of his own contriving.

Besides, it cannot be denied that the same man was a happy superintendent of all pomps and ceremonies; he excelled in planning magnificent shews, such as coronations and triumphal entries, christenings, marriages and funerals, and all kind of processions, and spared no cost to decorate them.

His rival manager of the other theatre was so far from having the least relish for dramatic poetry, that although he was a gentleman of birth and fortune, one easy in his behaviour and polite in his address, his greatest pleasure consisted in the encouragement of low athletics and mean buffoons, of wrestlers and boxers, of dancers and tumblers, by whose assistance and advice he brought all Sadlers Wells upon the stage, and gave various exhibitions of
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DEDICATION.

tall monsters and ridiculous moun-
banks*.

With such managers LILLO's plain sense
and unaffected manners could hope for
little encouragement.

Had he lived to see the happy revolution
in the government of the Theatre introdu-
ced by you, he would have rejoiced to behold
the greatest genius and most indefatigable
industry constantly employed to render the
stage respectable as well as flourishing, and
the most consummate actor and judicious
manager not only the avowed patron as
well as kind instructor of actors, but the
friend and fellow labourer of authors.

LILLO's modesty would have profited by
the advice your perfect knowledge of the
Drama would have suggested to him, and

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* It must be granted that during the period I am
speaking of, that is, from 1734 to 1739, this ma-
nager was prevailed upon to act LILLO's CHRIS-
TIAN HERO, and that he revived several of
Shakespeare's Plays; particularly, As You Like It,
and the Merchant of Venice; in which Quin,
Macklin, Chapman, Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs.
Clive appeared to great advantage.



DEDICATION.

his gratitude and integrity would have done justice to your candor and sagacity; for he would not only have taken a liberal advantage of your criticisms, but would have freely owned the force and value of them.

That you may long continue to live beloved and respected by all ranks of people, and happy in the consciousness of exerting your abilities for publick and private good, is the sincere and hearty wish of,

S I R,

Your most obedient

Humble servant,

THE EDITOR.

