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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**

Some Account Of The Life Of Mr. George Lillo.

**urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-2376**

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SOME  
A C C O U N T  
OF THE LIFE OF  
Mr. GEORGE LILLO.

THERE is no passion more incident to our nature than the desire to know the actions of men, whose genius have raised our admiration, and whose labours have given us instruction or entertainment. But however willing we may be to indulge so agreeable a curiosity, there are few authors, the history of whose lives can afford sufficient materials to fill a reasonable volume.

Such writers indeed as have been distinguished by offices in the government of a kingdom, or such as have embraced particular party principles, or have sided with factions in the state, will always create materials for the biographer, and amusement for the reader.

Selden and Grotius, two eminent writers of the last century, were as much distinguished by their



their misfortunes and their struggles with power, as for their genius and learning.

Waller was a senator and a statesman, as well as a polite scholar and a great poet. Swift, the friend and coadjutor of Harley and Bolingbroke, took on himself the protection of a kingdom in opposition to a great minister.—We peruse with pleasure the lives of writers whose transactions are varied and multifarious, who step from their studies into the great theatre of the world, and who join the love of business to the cultivation of polite literature. But such examples are rare.

Addison and Pope were certainly great authors, but who can read with pleasure the cold yet correct narrative of Addison's life by Tickel? and when we have reduced the bulky history of Pope, compiled by Ruffhead, to its genuine size, how little will remain that belongs properly to the subject? The remarks on Pope's writings composed by a very learned man, and which were purposely given to enrich this motley manufacture, do but more evidently expose the insipidity of the rest of the work, as the blaze of a torch serves to discover the deformities of a dungeon.

A great genius has indeed struck out a new path to fame in this beaten road of literature, Biography. The uncommon misfortunes, turbulent passions, irregular conduct and unhappy fate of Richard Savage, son of Earl Rivers, gave birth to one of the finest compositions in our own or any other language.

It





It is generally said that LILLO lived in obscurity and died in distress; variety of anecdote and choice of amusement cannot be expected from so unpromising a subject.

The short account of LILLO's life in Cibber's History of the Poets, is the only record hitherto published which contains any thing certain or probable relating to him, but that is very defective and affords little information.

The author of the Companion to the Playhouse contents himself with repeating what Cibber had related; he states no new facts respecting the writer or his works.—The compiler of a List of Dramatic Authors, published with Whincop's tragedy of Scanderbeg, betrays a want of candor, and is equally destitute of truth and accuracy.

Perhaps in reviewing the fate of LILLO's Plays we may strike out some sparks of intelligence, which may afford entertainment and illustrate our author's character.

I think it is agreed on all hands, that LILLO was born on the 4th of February 1693, somewhere near Moorgate.—That he learned and practised the business of a jeweller.

It is very singular that no poetical effort of his should appear in print, at least under his name, till the year 1730, when he produced a Ballad Opera, called SILVIA or the COUNTRY BURIAL, which was acted at the Theatre Royal, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.—This is one of the best dramatic pieces which had then appeared, written in imitation of the celebrated Beggar's Opera;  
for





for *SILVIA* has invention in its fable, simplicity in its manners, gaiety in its incidents, and variety as well as truth of character; but what will still more recommend it to the judicious, this Pastoral Burlesque Serio-Comic Opera was written with a view to inculcate the love of truth and virtue, and a hatred of vice and falshood.—Notwithstanding the apparent merit of the *COUNTRY BURIAL* it met with little success.

About a year after *LILLO* offered his *GEORGE BARNWELL* to Mr. Theophilus Cibber, manager of a company of comedians then acting at the Theatre of Drury Lane, during the summer season.

The author's friends, though they were well acquainted with the merit of *BARNWELL*, could not be without their fears for the success of a play, which was formed on a new plan—A history of manners deduced from an old ballad; and, which the wittlings of the time called a Newgate Tragedy.

It is true some of our best dramatic poets, in their most affecting pieces, had lowered the buskin, and fitted it to characters in life inferior to Kings and Heroes; yet no writer had ventured to descend so low as to introduce the character of a merchant, or his apprentice, into a tragedy.—However the author's attempt was fully justified by his success; plain sterling sense, joined to many happy strokes of nature and passion, supplied the imagined deficiencies of art, and more tears were shed at the representation of this home-spun drama, than at all  
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the elaborate imitations of ancient fables and ancient manners by the learned moderns.

Mr. Pope, who was present at the first acting of *BARNWELL*, very candidly observed that *LILLO* had never deviated from propriety, except in a few passages in which he aimed at a greater elevation of language than was consistent with character and situation \*.

*BARNWELL* was acted about twenty nights in the hottest part of the year to crowded houses.

The great success of this play excited the attention of Queen Caroline, who desired to see it in MSS †. A message was dispatched to Drury Lane Theatre, and Mr. Wilks waited upon her Majesty with the play. But I have not been able to learn whether the author gained any emolument from the Queen's curiosity. One circumstance which happened the first night that *BARNWELL* was acted is so singular that it ought not to be forgotten.

Certain witty and facetious persons, who call themselves the town, bought up large quantities of the ballad of *GEORGE BARNWELL*, with an intent to make a ludicrous comparison between the old song, and the new tragedy; but so forcible and so pathetic were the scenes of the *LONDON MERCHANT*, that these merry gentlemen were quite disappointed and ashamed; they were obliged to throw away their ballads and take out their handkerchiefs †.

Encou-

\* *LILLO's* life by Cibber, Vol. I. † Gentleman's Magazine, July 1731.

‡ Cibber's life of *LILLO*.





Encouraged by the success of this play, LILLO ventured upon a subject more arduous and sublime.--About three or four years after, he wrote the CHRISTIAN HERO, which was acted at Drury Lane Theatre with tolerable success. The plot of the tragedy is to be found in the history of the Turks. The character of Scanderbeg, the hero of the play, resembles that of Tamerlane, and is well contrasted with Amurath, the Turkish Sultan. The characters in this tragedy are in general strongly marked; some pathetic scenes of the CHRISTIAN HERO would not disgrace the works of our most esteemed dramatic writers. The manners of the Turks and Christians are well discriminated. The interview in the second act between the generals of both armies, is happily conducted.—It is, I believe, an imitation of a similar parley between Caled and Eumenes in the Siege of Damascus. But the Scene in the CHRISTIAN HERO is greatly heightened by the distress of Scanderbeg, whose mistress, Althea, had fallen by the chance of war into the hands of his enemies.

Upon the whole it must be granted that the muse of LILLO was more adapted to an humble than a lofty theme, to plots not so intricate, nor so overcharged with episode, to characters less elevated, and situations more familiar.

The editor of a Tragedy of Scanderbeg, written by one Mr. Whincop, has ventured to charge the author of the CHRISTIAN HERO with



with stealing the hint of his play, from his having seen Scanderbeg in MSS.

It is to be observed that this accusation was brought against LILLO eight years after his death, and near thirteen since his play was first acted. The charge rests solely on the credit of a nameless editor; and I think we may fairly reject it as an invidious attack upon the character of a man whose moral conduct has never been impeached, and who was greatly esteemed for his modesty and integrity. Besides, this tragedy of Scanderbeg (so much cried up by the editor and his friend) is a despicable performance, full of rant and bombast.

Towards the end of the acting season in 1736, the FATAL CURIOSITY, one of Mr. LILLO's most affecting tragedies, was acted at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket at the time when Fielding, our English Cervantes, was manager of that playhouse.

It is not easy to guess why this excellent piece was not represented at one of the Theatres Royal; as our author's character as a writer was by this time well established. It cannot be doubted that LILLO applied to the managers of the more regular theatres, and had been rejected, so that he was reduced to the necessity of having his play acted at an inferior Play-house, and by persons not so well skilled in their profession as the players of the established Theatres.

However, Mr. Fielding, who had a just sense of our author's merit, and who had often  
in



in his humorous pieces \* laughed at those ridiculous and absurd criticks who could not possibly understand the merit of BARNWELL because the subject was low, treated LILLO with great politeness and friendship. He took upon himself the management of the play, and the instruction of the actors.

It was during the rehearsal of the FATAL CURIOSITY that I had an opportunity to see and to converse with Mr. LILLO.---Plain and simple as he was in his address, his manner of conversing was modest, affable and engaging. When invited to give his opinion how a particular sentiment should be uttered by the actor, he expressed himself in the gentlest and most obliging terms, and conveyed instruction and conviction with good nature and good manners.

The plot of the FATAL CURIOSITY, like that of BARNWELL, was taken from private life.

An unhappy old man and his wife who lived at Penryn in Cornwall, impatient under their misfortunes and rendered desperate by extreme poverty, murdered their guest, a sailor just returned from the Indies, for the sake of his wealth: to aggravate the atrociousness of the crime, upon examination, the murdered person proved to be their own son.

LILLO has happily varied some of the circumstances of this dismal story, and has added others to render it more dramatic.

The

\* Particularly in Joseph Andrews.



Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xvii

The language of this play is more elevated than that of any of our author's works; in some few passages it must be owned that it is too rich and flowery, and partakes rather of the descriptive than the familiar stile suited to the subject and characters. However the author has seldom indulged himself in this luxuriancy of fancy; for in general his style is plain and easy, though vigorous and energetic; and he is remarkable in this tragedy and in his *ELMERICK* for a magnificent simplicity of style, so justly commended by Mr. Colman in *Massenger* and the rest of our old dramatic writers.

Fielding was not merely content to revise the *FATAL CURIOSITY*, and to instruct the actors how to do justice to their parts. He warmly recommended the play to his friends, and to the public. Besides all this he presented the author with a well written prologue; which, as it contains a just criticism on modern tragedies, the reader will not be displeased to find here.

PROLOGUE TO THE *FATAL CURIOSITY*.

"THE Tragic Muse has long forgot to please  
With Shakespeare's nature, or with Fletcher's ease:  
No passion mov'd, thro' five long acts you sit,  
Charm'd with the poet's language, or his wit.  
Fine things are said, no matter whence they fall;  
Each single character might speak them all.

But from this modern fashionable way,  
To-night, our author begs your leave to stray.





No fustian hero rages here to-night;  
 No armies fall, to fix a tyrant's right;  
 From lower life we draw our scene's distress:  
 —Let not your equals move your pity less!  
 Virtue distress'd in humble state support;  
 Nor think she never lives without the court.

Tho' to our scenes no royal robes belong,  
 And tho' our little stage as yet be young,  
 Throw both your scorn and prejudice aside;  
 Let us with favour not contempt be try'd;  
 Thro' the first acts a kind attention lend,  
 The growing scene shall force you to attend;  
 Shall catch the eyes of every tender fair,  
 And make them charm their lovers with a tear.  
 The lover too by pity shall impart  
 His tender passion to his fair one's heart:  
 The breast which others anguish cannot move,  
 Was ne'er the seat of friendship, or of love."

In the conduct of this play LILLO has shewn great judgement. The characters of Old Wilmot and his Wife exhibit strong pictures of pride heightened by poverty, impatience and despair. The reader is frequently though gradually prepared for the dreadful catastrophe in the last scene of the play.

This tragedy is I believe little known, and though I am an enemy to long citations, I shall quote some particular interesting speeches in the first and second act, and a whole scene in the last, which the reader will esteem a masterpiece of writing.

Old Wilmot begins the play with a soliloquy that strongly marks his character and situation.

OLD



OLD WILMOT.

The day is far advanc'd; the chearful sun  
Pursues with vigour his repeated course;  
No labour lessening nor no time decaying  
His strength, or splendor: evermore the same,  
From age to age his influence sustains  
Dependent worlds, bestows both life and motion  
On the dull mass that forms the dusky orbs,  
Cheers them with heat, and gilds them with his  
brightness.

Yet man, of jarring elements compos'd,  
Who passes from change to change, from the first hour  
Of his frail being till his dissolution,  
Enjoys the sad prerogative above him,  
To think, and to be wretched.—What is life,  
To him that's born to die! or what that wisdom  
Whose perfection ends in knowing we know no-  
thing!

Mere contradiction all! A tragic farce,  
Tedious tho' short, and without art elaborate,  
Ridiculously sad—

In the following scene the author artfully  
contrives to make the unhappy old man dis-  
charge the only person who could have pre-  
vented the murder of his son, at the same time  
that he introduces the character of the amiable  
Charlot, on whose bounty they had hitherto  
subsisted, though now they were reduced to the  
lowest ebb of poverty. Old Wilmot when he  
parts with his faithful servant, Randal, who is  
willing to endure the utmost distress rather than  
quit his service, gives him such advice for his  
future conduct in the world as farther displays  
his





his distressful situation and the impatience of his  
his mind.

OLD WILMOT.

——— Prithee, Randal,  
How long hast thou been with me?

RANDAL.

Fifteen years.

I was a very child when first you took me  
To wait upon your son, my dear young master!  
I oft have wish'd, I'd gone to India with him;  
Tho' you, desponding, give him o'er for lost.

[OLD WILMOT *wipes his eyes.*]

I am to blame—this talk revives your sorrow  
For his absence.

OLD WILMOT.

How can that be reviv'd,  
Which never died?

RANDAL.

The whole of my intent  
Was to confess your bounty, that supplied  
The loss of both my parents; I was long  
The object of your charitable care.

OLD WILMOT.

No more of that; thou'lt serv'd me longer since  
Without reward; so that account is balanc'd,  
Or rather I'm thy debtor—I remember,  
When poverty began to show her face  
Within these walls, and all my other servants,  
Like pamper'd vermin from a falling house,  
Retreated with the plunder they had gain'd,  
And left me, too indulgent and remiss  
For such ungrateful wretches, to be crush'd

Beneath



Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xxi

Beneath the ruin they had help'd to make,  
That you, more good than wife, refus'd to leave me.

R A N D A L.

Nay, I beseech you, sir!—

O L D W I L M O T.

With my distress,  
In perfect contradiction to the world,  
Thy love, respect and diligence increas'd;  
Now all the recompence within my power,  
Is to discharge thee, Randal, from my hard,  
Unprofitable service.

R A N D A L.

Heaven forbid!  
Shall I forsake you in your worst necessity? —  
Believe me, sir, my honest soul abhors  
The barb'rous thought.

O L D W I L M O T.

What! canst thou feed on air?  
I have not left wherewith to purchase food  
For one meal more.

R A N D A L.

Rather than leave you thus,  
I'll beg my bread, and live on others bounty  
While I serve you.

O L D W I L M O T.

Down, down my swelling heart,  
Or burst in silence: 'tis thy cruel fate  
Insults thee by his kindness—he is innocent  
Of all the pain it gives thee—Go thy ways—  
I will no more suppress thy youthful hopes  
Of rising in the world.

R A N D A L.

'Tis true, I'm young,  
And never try'd my fortune, or my genius:

a 3

Which



Which may perhaps find out some happy means,  
As yet unthought of, to supply your wants.

OLD WILMOT.

Thou tortur'st me—I hate all obligations  
Which I can ne'er return—And who art thou,  
That I shou'd stoop to take 'em from thy hand!  
Care for thyself, but take no thought for me;  
I will not want thee—trouble me no more.

RANDAL.

Be not offended, sir, and I will go.  
I ne'er repin'd at your commands before;  
But heaven's my witness, I obey you now  
With strong reluctance, and a heavy heart.  
Farewell, my worthy master!

[Going.

OLD WILMOT.

Farewell—stay—

As thou art yet a stranger to the world,  
Of which, alas! I've had too much experience,  
I shou'd, methinks, before we part, bestow  
A little counsel on thee—Dry thy eyes—  
If thou weep'st thus, I shall proceed no farther.  
Dost thou aspire to greatness, or to wealth,  
Quit books and the unprofitable search  
Of wisdom there, and study human kind:  
No science will avail thee without that;  
But that obtain'd, thou need'st not any other.  
This will instruct thee to conceal thy views,  
And wear the face of probity and honour,  
Till thou hast gain'd thy end; which must be ever  
Thy own advantage, at that man's expence  
Who shall be weak enough to think thee honest.

RANDAL.

You mock me, sure.

OLD



Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xxiii

OLD WILMOT.

I never was more serious.

RANDAL.

Why shou'd you counsel what you scorn'd to practise?

OLD WILMOT.

Because that foolish scorn has been my ruin.  
I've been an idiot, but wou'd have thee wiser,  
And treat mankind, as they wou'd treat thee, Randal;  
As they deserve, and I've been treated by 'em.  
Thou'lt seen by me, and those who now despise me,  
How men of fortune fall, and beggars rise;  
Shun my example; treasure up my precepts;  
The world's before thee—be a knave and prosper.  
What art thou dumb? *[After a long pause.]*

RANDAL.

Amazement ties my tongue!

Where are your former principles?

OLD WILMOT.

No matter;

Suppose I have renounc'd 'em: I have passions,  
And love thee still; therefore would have thee think,  
The world is all a scene of deep deceit,  
And he who deals with mankind on the square,  
Is his own bubble, and undoes himself. *[Exit.]*

In the same act, Maria the servant and companion of Charlot, upon the approach of Agnes, the wife of Old Wilmot, prepares the reader by a short but fine delineation of her character.

MARIA.

Her faded dress, unfashionably fine,  
As ill conceals her poverty, as that

a 4

Strain'd





Strain'd complaisance, her haughty swelling heart:  
 Tho' perishing for want, so far from asking,  
 She ne'er receives a favour uncompell'd,  
 And while she ruins scorns to be oblig'd.

In the second act Young Wilmot persuades Randal to counterfeit a letter from Charlot, with a view to be introduced as a friend of the young lady to his distressed parents, ~~with a view to~~ have an opportunity to be fully acquainted with their unhappy situation, and to relieve them by making a discovery of himself when he should think it most proper.

This unhappy refinement of curiosity occasions the dreadful catastrophe which follows in the last act.

The interview between Young Wilmot and his parents occasions a most pathetic scene, from which the reader will not be displeased to read the following extract.

## A C T II.

## O L D W I L M O T.

The lady calls you here her valu'd friend;  
 Enough, tho' nothing more should be imply'd,  
 To recommend you to our best esteem.  
 — A worthless acquisition! — may she find  
 Some means that better may express her kindness;  
 But she, perhaps, hath purpos'd to enrich  
 You with herself, and end her fruitless sorrow  
 For one whom death alone can justify  
 For leaving her so long. If it be so,  
 May you repair his loss, and be to Charlot  
 A second, happier Wilmot. Partial nature,

Who

Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xxv

Who only favours youth, as feeble age  
Were not her offspring, or below her care,  
Has seal'd our doom: no second hope shall spring  
From my dead loins, and Agnes' sterile womb,  
To dry our tears, and dissipate despair.

AGNES.

The last and most abandon'd of our kind,  
By heaven and earth neglected or despis'd,  
The loathsome grave, that robb'd us of our son  
And all our joys in him, must be our refuge.

YOUNG WILMOT.

Let ghosts unpardon'd, or devoted fiends,  
Fear without hope, and wail in such sad strains;  
But grace defend the living from despair.  
The darkest hours precede the rising sun;  
And mercy may appear, when least expected.

OLD WILMOT.

This I have heard a thousand times repeated,  
And have, believing, been as oft deceiv'd.

YOUNG WILMOT.

Behold in me an instance of its truth.  
At sea twice shipwreck'd, and as oft the prey  
Of lawless pirates; by the Arabs thrice  
Surpris'd, and robb'd on shore: and once reduc'd  
To worse than these, the sum of all distress  
That the most wretched feel on this side hell,  
Ev'n slavery itself: yet here I stand,  
Except one trouble that will quickly end,  
The happiest of mankind.

OLD WILMOT.

A rare example  
Of fortune's caprice; apter to surprize,  
Or entertain, than comfort, or instruct.  
If you wou'd reason from events, be just,

And





And count, when you escap'd, how many perish'd;  
And draw your inference thence.

AGNES.

Alas! who knows,  
But we were render'd childless by some storm,  
In which you, tho' preserv'd, might bear a part.

YOUNG WILMOT.

How has my curiosity betray'd me  
Into superfluous pain! I faint with fondness:  
And shall, if I stay longer, rush upon 'em,  
Proclaim myself their son, kiss and embrace 'em  
Till their souls, transported with the excess  
Of pleasure and surprize, quit their frail mansions,  
And leave 'em breathless in my longing arms.  
By circumstances then and slow degrees,  
They must be let into a happiness  
Too great for them to bear at once, and live:  
That Charlot will perform: I need not feign  
To ask an hour for rest. [*Aside.*] Sir, I intreat  
The favour to retire where, for a while,  
I may repose myself. You will excuse  
This freedom, and the trouble that I give you:  
'Tis long since I have slept, and nature calls.

OLD WILMOT.

I pray no more: believe we're only troubled,  
That you shou'd think any excuse were needful.

YOUNG WILMOT.

The weight of this is some incumbrance to me,  
[*Takes a casket out of his bosom and gives it to  
his mother.*]

And its contents of value: if you please  
To take the charge of it till I awake,  
I shall not rest the worse. If I shou'd sleep  
Till I am ask'd for, as perhaps I may,  
I beg that you wou'd wake me.

AGNES.

AGNES.

Doubt it not:

Distracted as I am with various woes,  
I shall remember that.

[Exit.

If I am not greatly mistaken, in all Dramatic Poetry, there are few scenes where the passions are so highly wrought up, as in the third Act of the FATAL CURIOSITY, where a man, contrary to the conviction of his mind and amidst all the agonies which reluctant nature feels, is tempted to the commission of a most desperate and shocking action. LILLO need not be ashamed to yield to Shakespeare, who is superior to all other writers; but excepting the celebrated scenes of murder in Macbeth, these in the FATAL CURIOSITY, for just representation of anguish, remorse, despair, and horror, bear away the palm.

I shall make no apology for anticipating the reader's curiosity by giving this master-piece of fine writing, as his perusing it here may engage him not only to read the whole play, but induce him to be better acquainted with the works of a man, who is so great a painter of the terrible graces.

FATAL CURIOSITY, ACT III.

*Enter AGNES alone with the casket in her hand.*

WHO should this stranger be?—and then this casket—

He says it is of value, and yet trusts it,  
As if a trifle, to a stranger's hand—  
His confidence amazes me—Perhaps





## xxviii THE LIFE OF

It is not what he says—I'm strongly tempted  
 To open it, and see.—No, let it rest.  
 Why shou'd my curiosity excite me,  
 To search and pry into th' affairs of others;  
 Who have t'employ my thoughts so many cares  
 And sorrows of my own?—With how much ease  
 The spring gives way!—surprizing! most prodigious!

My eyes are dazzled, and my ravish'd heart  
 Leaps at the glorious sight—How bright's the lustre,  
 How immense the worth of these fair jewels!  
 Ay, such a treasure wou'd expel for ever  
 Base poverty, and all its abject train;  
 The mean devices we're reduc'd to use  
 To keep out famine, and preserve our lives  
 From day to day; the cold neglect of friends;  
 The galling scorn, or more provoking pity  
 Of an insulting world—Possess'd of these,  
 Plenty, content, and power might take their turn,  
 And lofty pride bare its aspiring head  
 At our approach, and once more bend before us.  
 —A pleasing dream!—'Tis past; and now I wake  
 More wretched by the happiness I've lost.  
 For sure it was a happiness to think,  
 Tho' but for a moment, such a treasure mine.  
 Nay, it was more than thought—I saw and touch'd  
 The bright temptation, and I see it yet——  
 'Tis here—'tis mine. I have it in possession——  
 —Must I resign it? must I give it back?  
 Am I in love with misery and want?——  
 To rob myself and court so vast a loss;—  
 —Retain it then. But how?—There is a way——  
 Why sinks my heart? why does my blood run cold?  
 Why am I thrill'd with horror?—'Tis not choice,  
 But dire necessity suggests the thought,

*Enter*



Mr. GEORGE LILLO, xxix

Enter OLD WILMOT.

The mind contented, with how little pains  
The wand'ring senses yield to soft repose,  
And die to gain new life ! He's fall'n asleep  
Already—happy man !—what dost thou think,  
My Agnes, of our unexpected guest ?  
He seems to me a youth of great humanity :  
Just ere he clos'd his eyes, that swam in tears,  
He wrung my hand, and press'd it to his lips ;  
And with a look, that pierc'd me to the soul,  
Begg'd me to comfort thee : and—dost thou hear me ?  
What art thou gazing on ?—fie, 'tis not well—  
This casket was deliver'd to you clos'd :  
Why have you open'd it ? shou'd this be known,  
How mean must we appear ?

AGNES.

And who shall know it ?

OLD WILMOT.

There is a kind of pride, a decent dignity  
Due to ourselves : which, spite of our misfortunes,  
May be maintain'd, and cherish'd to the last.  
To live without reproach, and without leave  
To quit the world, shews sovereign contempt,  
And noble scorn of its relentless malice.

AGNES.

Shews sovereign madness and a scorn of sense.  
Pursue no farther this detested theme :  
I will not die, I will not leave the world  
For all that you can urge, until compell'd.

OLD WILMOT.

To chase a shadow, when the setting sun  
Is darting his last rays, were just as wise,  
As your anxiety for fleeting life,  
Now the last means for its support are failing :

Were





Were famine not as mortal as the sword,  
This warmth might be excus'd—But take thy choice  
—Die how you will, you shall not die alone.

AGNES.

Nor live, I hope.

OLD WILMOT.

There is no fear of that.

AGNES.

Then we'll live both.

OLD WILMOT.

Strange folly! where's the means?

AGNES.

The means are there; those jewels—

OLD WILMOT.

Ha!—Take heed:

Perhaps thou dost but try me; yet take heed—  
There's nought so monstrous but the mind of man  
In some conditions may be brought t'approve;  
Theft, sacrilege, treason, and parricide,  
When flatt'ring opportunity intic'd,  
And desperation drove, have been committed  
By those who once wou'd start to hear them nam'd.

AGNES.

And add to these detested suicide,  
Which, by a crime much less, we may avoid.

OLD WILMOT.

Th' inhospitable murder of our guest!—  
How cou'dst thou form a thought so very tempting,  
So advantageous, so secure and easy;  
And yet so cruel, and so full of horror?

AGNES.

'Tis less impiety, less against nature,  
To take another's life, than end our own.

OLD

Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xxxi

OLD WILMOT.

It is no matter, whether this or that  
Be, in itself, the less or greater crime:  
Howe'er we may deceive ourselves or others,  
We act from inclination, not by rule,  
Or none cou'd act amiss—and that all err,  
None but the conscious hypocrite denies.  
—O! what is man, his excellence and strength,  
When in an hour of trial and desertion,  
Reason, his noblest power, may be suborn'd  
To plead the cause of vile assassination!

AGNES.

You're too severe: reason may justly plead  
For her own preservation.

OLD WILMOT.

Rest contented:

Whate'er resistance I may seem to make,  
I am betray'd within: my will's seduc'd,  
And my whole soul infected. The desire  
Of life returns, and brings with it a train  
Of appetites that rage to be supply'd.  
Whoever stands to parley with temptation,  
Does it to be o'ercome.

AGNES.

Then nought remains,

But the swift execution of a deed  
That is not to be thought on, or delay'd.  
We must dispatch him sleeping: shou'd he wake,  
'Twere madness to attempt it.

OLD WILMOT.

True, his strength

Single is more, much more than ours united;  
So may his life, perhaps, as far exceed  
Ours in duration, shou'd he 'scape this snare.





Gen'rous, unhappy man! O! what cou'd move thee  
To put thy life and fortune in the hands  
Of wretches mad with anguish!

AGNES.

By what means?  
By stabbing, suffocation, or by strangling,  
Shall we effect his death?

OLD WILMOT.

Why, what a fiend!—  
How cruel, how remorseless and impatient  
Have pride, and poverty made thee?

AGNES.

Barbarous man!  
Whose wasteful riots ruin'd our estate,  
And drove our son, ere the first down had spread  
His rosy cheeks, spite of my sad presages,  
Earnest intreaties, agonies and tears,  
To seek his bread 'mongst strangers, and to perish  
In some remote, inhospitable land—  
The loveliest youth, in person and in mind,  
That ever crown'd a groaning mother's pain!  
Where was thy pity, where thy patience then?  
Thou cruel husband! thou unnat'ral father!  
Thou most remorseless, most ungrateful man,  
To waste my fortune, rob me of my son;  
To drive me to despair, and then reproach me  
For being what thou'st made me.

OLD WILMOT.

Dry thy tears:  
I ought not to reproach thee. I confess  
That thou hast suffer'd much: so have we both.  
But chide no more: I'm wrought up to thy purpose.  
The poor, ill-fated, unsuspecting victim,

Ere

GEORGE LILLO. xxxiii

Ere he reclin'd him on the fatal couch,  
From which he's ne'er to rise, took off the sash,  
And costly dagger that thou saw'st him wear;  
And thus, unthinking, furnish'd us with arms  
Against himself. Which shall I use?

AGNES.

The sash.

If you make use of that I can assist.

OLD WILMOT.

No—'tis a dreadful office, and I'll spare  
Thy trembling hands the guilt—steal to the door  
And bring me word if he be still asleep.

[Exit AGNES.

Or I'm deceiv'd, or he pronounc'd himself  
The happiest of mankind. Deluded wretch!  
Thy thoughts are perishing, thy youthful joys,  
Touch'd by the icy hand of grisly death,  
Are withering in their bloom—but thought extin-  
guish'd,

He'll never know the loss, nor feel the bitter  
Pangs of disappointment—then I was wrong  
In counting him a wretch: to die well pleas'd,  
Is all the happiest of mankind can hope for.  
To be a wretch, is to survive the loss  
Of every joy, and even hope itself,  
As I have done—why do I mourn him then?  
For, by the anguish of my tortur'd soul,  
He's to be envy'd, if compar'd with me.

*Enter AGNES with YOUNG WILMOT's dagger.*

AGNES.

The stranger sleeps at present; but so restless  
His slumbers seem, they can't continue long,  
Come, come, dispatch—Here I've secur'd his dagger.

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OLD





## THE LIFE OF

OLD WILMOT.

O Agnes! Agnes! if there be a hell  
'Tis just we shou'd expect it.

[*Goes to take the dagger, but lets it fall.*]

AGNES.

Nay, for shame,  
Shake off this panic, and be more yourself.

OLD WILMOT.

What's to be done? on what had we determin'd?

AGNES.

You're quite dismay'd. I'll do the deed myself.

[*Takes up the dagger.*]

OLD WILMOT.

Give me the fatal steel  
'Tis but a single murder,  
Necessity, impatience and despair,  
The three wide mouths of that true Cerberus,  
Grim poverty, demands — They shall be stopp'd.  
Ambition, persecution, and revenge  
Devour their millions daily: and shall I —  
But follow me, and see how little cause  
You had to think there was the least remains  
Of manhood, pity, mercy, or remorse  
Left in this savage breast. [*Going the wrong way.*]

AGNES.

Where do you go?

The street is that way.

OLD WILMOT.

True! I had forgot.

AGNES.

Quite, quite confounded.

OLD WILMOT.

Well, I recover.

————— I shall find the way.

[*Exit.*]



Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xxxv

AGNES.

O softly! softly!

The least noise undoes us.—Still I fear him:  
—No—now he seems determin'd—O! that pause,  
That cowardly pause!—his resolution fails—  
'Tis wisely done to lift your eyes to heaven;  
When did you pray before? I have no patience—  
How he surveys him! what a look was there!—  
How full of anguish, pity and remorse!—  
He'll never do it—Strike, or give it o'er—  
—No, he recovers—but that trembling arm  
May miss its aim; and if he fails, we're lost—  
'Tis done—O! no; he lives, he struggles yet.

YOUNG WILMOT.

O! father! father!

[*In another room.*]

AGNES.

Quick, repeat the blow.

What pow'r shall I invoke to aid thee, Wilmot!  
---Yet hold thy hand---inconstant, wretched woman!  
What doth my heart recoil, and bleed with him  
Whose murder was contriv'd---O Wilmot! Wilmot!

Notwithstanding all the friendly endeavours of Fielding, this play met with very little success at its first representation, and this was owing in all probability to its being brought on in the latter part of the season, when the public had been satiated with a long run of *Pasquin*.—But it is with pleasure I observe that Fielding generously persisted to serve the man whom he had once espoused; he tacked the *FATAL CURIOSITY* to his *Historical Register*, which was played with great success in the ensuing winter. The

b 2.

tragedy





tragedy was acted to more advantage than before, and was often repeated, to the emolument of the author, and with the approbation of the public.

It was the fate of LILLO to be reduced to the necessity of having his plays represented by inferior actors. In 1738, he gave to the players, acting during the summer season at Covent-Garden, his play of MARINA, taken from an old tragedy attributed to Shakespeare, called, Pericles, Prince of Tyre. It is true the first editors of this great father of the English stage rejected Pericles, and several other pieces that had been printed with his name to them during his life-time. It is most likely that Shakespeare revised this old drama, and gave a few touches of his own inimitable pencil; that he added or altered a character or two, and wrote a scene here and there; which, like the lustre of Bassianus's ring\* in the cavern, illuminated the surrounding darkness.

The preserving from oblivion scenes which will give perpetual pleasure in the reading, is undoubtedly meritorious, and LILLO deserves as much praise for saving the sketches of a Shakespeare, as he who carefully keeps amongst his

\* *Marcus.* Upon his bloody finger he doth wear  
A precious ring, that lightens all the hole,  
Which like a taper in some monument  
Doth shine upon the dead man's earthy cheeks,  
And shews the ragged entrails of the pit.

Tit. Andron. Act 2. Sc. 7.

This fine passage has been quoted to prove that Shakespeare wrote some part of this horrid tragedy.



Mr. GEORGE LILLO. xxxvii

his rarities, a maimed statue of an illustrious artist.

There is something pleasingly wild in the character of Marina, which bespeaks her to be the offspring of sweet Fancy's child. At her first appearance she makes use of such happy, yet uncommon expressions, as will not permit us to doubt her origin.

ACT I. SCENE I.

MARINA.

No, I will rob gay Tellus of her weeds,  
To strew thy grave with flowers. The yellows, blues,  
The purple violets and marygolds  
Shall as a carpet hang upon thy tomb,  
While summer days do last. Ah me, poor maid!  
Born in a tempest when my mother dy'd,  
And now I mourn a second mother's loss.  
This world to me is like a lasting storm,  
That swallows, piece by piece, the merchant's wealth,  
And in the end himself.

In this romantic fable of MARINA, a husband, contrary to all expectations, recovers his wife, and a father his daughter.

Pericles, when he views Marina, breaks out into an exclamation which could belong to none but our old inimitable bard.

PERICLES.

My long pent sorrow rages for a vent,  
And will o'erflow in tears: such was my wife;  
And such an one my daughter might have been;  
My queen's square brows, her stature to an inch,  
As wand-like straight, as silver voiced, her eyes

b 3

As





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As jewels like, in pace another Juno;  
And then like her she starves the ears she feeds,  
And makes them crave the more, the more she  
speaks."

A love of truth, innocence, and virtue, a firm resignation to the will of Providence, and a detestation of vice and falsehood, are constantly insisted upon, and strongly inculcated in all the compositions of honest LILLO.

I shall only give another quotation from this play, which consists of four very happy lines of LILLO grafted upon the old stock:

"Ye sons and daughters of adversity,  
Preserve you innocence, and each light grief  
So bounteous are the Gods to those who serve them)  
Shall be rewarded with ten thousand joys"

Indiscriminate praise is as suspicious as undistinguishing censure. Both proceed from one common parent, ignorance: though the latter is fostered by brutal malevolence, and the former cherished by indiscreet friendship.

In this play of MARINA, I think LILLO has preserved some characters, and retained some expressions of the old drama, which his judgment should have rejected. He did not reflect that rude modes of speech, when manners are uncultivated, are tolerated by custom; and words which might have been spoken without censure in the drawing room of Elizabeth, a swearing and masculine queen, and even in the  
4 science



fence of \*James, a prince who loved and propagated an obscene jest, would scarce be permitted now in some houses devoted to pleasure. A modern audience rejects with disgust the companions and language of a brothel.

Though less virtuous than our ancestors, we are more refined and polite in our public entertainments.

LILLO died the 3d of September, 1739.

He just lived to finish his tragedy of *ELMERICK*, which he left to the care of his friend Mr. John Gray, a bookfeller, who was first a dissenting minister, and afterwards, upon his complying with the terms of admission into the church of England, rector of a living at Rippon in Yorkshire. The author made it his dying request, to his friend Gray, that he would dedicate his *ELMERICK* to Frederick, Prince of Wales.—Marcellus and Germanicus were not more beloved by the Romans, than Frederick was by the people of England. His easiness of access, his readiness to succour the distressed, his encouragement of arts and sciences, and many other public and private virtues endeared him to persons of all ranks.—LILLO had a great veneration for the prince, and had, in a masque called *BRITANNIA* and *BATAVIA*, exerted his

b 4

poetical

\* This religious king, who wrote commentaries on some parts of Scripture, diverted himself with the bawdy jokes of a bishop (I think it was Neal of Rochester) during the time of divine service at the chapel royal.

Wilson's life of James.





poetical skill on the marriage of his Royal Highness to the Princess of Saxe-Gotha.

We learn from Mr. Gray's dedication of **ELMERICK**, that the Prince of Wales interested himself in the success of this tragedy by honouring it with his presence, and it is but reasonable to believe that the play was acted at Drury-Lane Theatre through the influence of the same royal patron.

The success was much greater than was expected from a tragedy written on so simple a plan, and with so antiquated, though so excellent a moral, as the necessity of universal and impartial justice.—It had novelty at least to recommend it: it was bold as well as hazardous in the poet, to introduce a scene where the man intrusted by his prince with the government of a kingdom, makes use of his delegated power against the consort of his royal master, and puts her to death for an injury committed against his own wife.

There could not have been a more proper actor chosen for the part of Elmerick than **Quin**: unacquainted as he was with passion, and incapable to express it, he always gave weight and dignity to sentiment, by his look, voice, and action.

When **Elmerick**, in the following invocation to Heaven, offers up the queen to justice, the audience felt with awe the force of **Quin's** elocution.



“Thou awful power, whose bright tremendous  
sword

Rules heaven and earth while hell resists in vain;  
Inexorably firm eternal justice!

Fearless I offer up this great delinquent,

To you and to Ismena: deign t’accept

No common sacrifice, and may it prove

A solemn lesson and a dreadful warning,

T’instruct and to alarm a guilty world.”

It is not generally known that Mr. Hammond interested himself in the success of *ELMERICK*; but I have authority from a gentleman, who stands foremost in the first class of living authors, to affirm that Mr. Hammond wrote the prologue and epilogue to that tragedy, and it plainly appears from them, that the success of the play was not a matter of indifference to him; and it may farther be reasonably supposed that his interest with the Prince of Wales was employed to the advantage of *ELMERICK*.

I am persuaded that I shall give pleasure to the reader, by inserting here these genuine productions of so elegant a writer as Mr. Hammond, who did not long survive the generous regard which he paid to the remains of *LILLO*.

The judgment past on the works of our author, by a man whose good taste in literature has always been unquestioned, will be a powerful sanction of his worth, and more than counter-balance the absurd attacks of illiberal criticism.

PRO-





## PROLOGUE TO ELMERICK,

*By Mr. HAMMOND.*

“NO laboured scenes to-night adorn our stage,  
 LILLO's plain sense wou'd here the heart engage.  
 He knew no art, no rule; but warmly thought  
 From passions force, and as he felt he wrote.  
 His BARNWELL once no criticks test could bear,  
 Yet from each eye still draws the natural tear.  
 With generous candour hear his latest strains,  
 And let kind pity shelter his remains.  
 Deprest by want, afflicted by disease,  
 Dying he wrote, and dying wish'd to please.  
 Oh may that wish be now humanely paid,  
 And no harsh critic vex his gentle shade.  
 'Tis yours his unsupported fame to save,  
 And bid one laurel grace his humble grave.”

## EPILOGUE.

*By the SAME.*

“YOU, who supreme o'er ev'ry work of wit  
 In judgement here unaw'd, unbiass'd sit,  
 The palatines and guardians of the pit;  
 If to your minds this merely-modern play,  
 No useful sense, no gen'rous warmth convey;  
 If fustian here, thro' each unnat'ral scene,  
 In strain'd conceits sound high, and nothing mean;  
 If lofty dulness for your vengeance call;  
 Like Elmerick judge, and let the guilty fall.  
 But if simplicity, with force and fire,  
 Unlabour'd thoughts and artless words inspire;

If, like the action which these scenes relate,  
 The whole appear irregularly great;  
 If master strokes the nobler passions move,  
 Then, like the king, acquit us, and approve."

I have heard from Roberts, an old comedian, who was well acquainted with Mr. LILLO, that his tragedy of ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM was written before the year 1736. How it came to lie dormant till 1762, when it was first acted in the summer season, I have not been able to learn. I have already observed, that it was the fate of this writer to have several of his plays acted to disadvantage. ARDEN is a strong instance of it; for excepting the principal character of the play, which was acted with great judgment by my friend Mr. Havard, we cannot say that much justice was done to this pathetic tragedy by the actors.

The part of Alicia was given to a raw young actress, unacquainted with the stage, and utterly incapable of comprehending, much less of representing a character which required the strongest expression of violent and conflicting passions.

The writer of The Companion to the Theatre, in the life of LILLO, does justice to ARDEN, and speaks with rapture of the effects produced by the representation of it, but at the same time he has absolutely omitted this tragedy in his Dictionary or List of Plays. However it is  
 certain





certain that ARDEN, though much applauded, was acted but one night.

The story of Arden's murder is not an improper subject for the stage, and many scenes of this play are happily written, in which the passions of love and jealousy, revenge and lust, of rage and remorse, are fully and faithfully delineated.

But, perhaps, in adhering too strictly to our old chronicles, the writer has deprived himself of advantages which he might have obtained by a slight deviation from them.—The poet says,

*Ficta, voluptatis causa, sunt proxima veris.*

I think we may go yet farther, and venture to affirm, that a probable story, well contrived, and artfully conducted, will give more pleasure in dramatic poetry, than a too close representation of real fact.

Such actions as will not bear to be seen, may yet be related to advantage. Detested characters, the perpetrators of low villainy, murderers and assassins, should be sparingly introduced upon the stage. The diabolical ministers of vengeance should be just seen and dismissed; though they may be spoken of with propriety. An audience will not long endure their company.

It is greatly to be lamented that some friend of the author had not applied to Mr. Garrick



to revise, correct, and amend this play; a few alterations by a gentleman who is so great a judge of Dramatic Poetry, and who has often shewn his skill in revising plays with success, would have rendered it a lasting entertainment to the public.

I have now finished my cursory review of LILLO's plays, and have little else to add.

Mr. Hammond more than insinuated in his prologue to *ELMERICK*, that LILLO died oppressed with want. The story of his poverty has been propagated upon this respectable authority.

But surely it was not very credible, that a man who was in the practice of a reputable and generally profitable business, such as the art of jewelling; and who besides, in the space of seven years, had accumulated by his plays a sum not much less than 800*l.* could possibly die surrounded with distress; especially if we take into this account, what was certainly true, that the man was very temperate, and addicted to no one vice or extravagance!

By great good fortune I was directed to a person who has justified my doubts upon this matter, and has, very politely, furnished me with some materials which farther illustrate our author's character.

This gentleman was formerly partner in the same business with Mr. LILLO; he now lives at Chelsea, and in an advanced age has retired from the fatigues of business.

From



From him I learn, that GEORGE LILLO was the son of a Dutch jeweller, who married an English woman; that he was born somewhere near Moorfields, and brought up to his father's business; that he himself was his partner in the same trade several years; that LILLO was a most valuable and amiable man; that in his moral conduct, and in the candour, generosity, and openness of his temper, he resembled the character of Thorowgood in his own BARNWELL; that, so far from being poor, he died in very easy circumstances, and rather in affluence than want; that he bequeathed several legacies, and left the bulk of his fortune to Mr. John Underwood his nephew, in which was included an estate of 60*l.* *per annum* \*.

This story of LILLO's distressed fortune, which Mr. Hammond inadvertently gave rise to, and which has been believed and repeated by others, may perhaps owe its rise to a particularity in our author's conduct, which this gentleman, his partner, communicated to me.

Towards the latter part of his life, Mr. LILLO, whether from judgment or humour,

\* Mr. Underwood, a jeweller in the city, son of Mr. John Underwood, favoured me with a sight of Mr. LILLO's will; by which it appears that besides the estate of 60*l.* *per annum* bequeathed to Underwood the father, subject to certain payments to different persons, he died possessed of several effects by no means inconsiderable.



determined to put the sincerity of his friends, who professed a very high regard for him, to a trial.

In order to carry on this design, he put in practise an odd kind of stratagem; he asked one of his intimate acquaintance to lend him a considerable sum of money, and for this he declared that he would give no bond, nor any other security, except a note of his hand; the person to whom he applied, not liking the terms, civilly refused him.

Soon after, LILLO met his nephew, Mr. Underwood, with whom he had been at variance for some time; he put the same question to him, desiring him to lend him money upon the same terms. His nephew, either from a sagacious apprehension of his uncle's real intention, or from generosity of spirit, immediately offered to comply with his request. LILLO was so well pleased with this ready compliance of Mr. Underwood, that he immediately declared that he was fully satisfied with the love and regard that his nephew bore him; he was convinced that his friendship was entirely disinterested, and assured him that he should reap the benefit such generous behaviour deserved. In consequence of this promise, he bequeathed him the bulk of his fortune.

I should have observed that LILLO was a Dissenter, but not of that sour cast which distinguishes some of our sectaries.

In





xlviij THE LIFE OF, &c.

In his person he was lussy, but not tall, of a pleasing aspect, though unhappily deprived of the sight of one eye.

I have no authority for putting the Life of SCANDERBEG among the works of LILLO—It has been usually bound up with his plays, and advertised with the CHRISTIAN HERO.

T. D.

