

ROBINSON CRUSOE

EXAMIN'D AND CRITICIS'D

823-
D314 n/gi

ROBINSON CRUSOE

EXAMIN'D AND CRITICIS'D

OR

A NEW EDITION OF CHARLES GILDON'S FAMOUS PAMPHLET

NOW PUBLISHED

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

TOGETHER WITH

Charles Gildon

an ESSAY ON GILDON'S LIFE

BY

Paul DOTTIN



LONDON & PARIS

J. M. DENT & SONS LTD

1923

*Two hundred copies of this book have been
printed for sale.*

This is n° 44

PREFACE

Charles Gildon's pamphlet on De Foe, though very popular at the time of its first issue, is now rare, the British Museum copy being the only one easily available. It is so important for a study of the composition and development of *Robinson Crusoe*, that its publication seems to me indispensable to complete my thesis, *Daniel de Foe et ses romans*.

My first idea was to reprint the text exactly as in the 1719 edition, merely adding explanatory notes. But as the only modern biography of Gildon is a very incomplete one in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I found it necessary to make further researches, and was rewarded by the discovery of many hitherto unknown and unpublished manuscript documents concerning Gildon, both in the British Museum and the Public Record Office. The result of these researches I have embodied in an Essay on Gildon's life.

The great writers of the Augustan Age have been very little studied, and the minor literati not at all. A life of one of the poor hack-writers of Grub-street is of some interest for the literary history of the period. Gildon's life is representative in this respect. He was, moreover, in relationship with many of the most celebrated men of his time. The history of his relations with them throws new light on some details in the lives of Addison, Dennis, Pope, and Prior, and enables us to arrive at a true estimate of the famous Addison-Pope quarrel.

I have added notes on some obscure passages in Gildon's pamphlet, and on his allusions to De Foe's novel. The references to the text of *Robinson Crusoe* apply to the most easily available edition of De Foe's works, that published by Hazlitt in 1840. I have systematically refrained from comments on Gildon's style, which is ordinary eighteenth-century English and presents no interesting peculiarities.

I have been much encouraged in my research by the courtesy of the officials in the Public Record Office and the British Museum, and wish formally to express my thanks to them, and also to Miss E. Deane of the University of Liverpool, to Prof. Cazamian and Prof. Guyot of the Sorbonne, for many helpful suggestions.

Paris, Sept. 1922.

Paul DOTTIN.

This book having been printed in France, the number of words divided at the end of the lines is rather unusual.

to my father

THE LIFE
OF
CHARLES GILDON

I

Gildon's first attempts as a writer

Charles Gildon was born in 1665 in Dorsetshire, at Gillingham, then a small village hidden among the woody hills which skirt the river Stour. The ravages of the Great Plague did not reach this pleasant and healthy countryside, and the boy grew up, sound and sturdy, when in all the chief cities of England the pitiless scourge struck new-born babes, and there was a new massacre of the Innocents.

Gildon was by birth a gentleman, and never failed throughout his life to emphasize the fact (1). His ancestors were substantial English yeomen, who had remained passionately attached to the Roman Catholic religion. His grand-father, a staunch old Cavalier, by his services to the Royalist Party drew on his head Cromwell's hatred, and two thirds of the family estate were confiscated by the Commonwealth. Charles's father, a zealous champion of the cause of the Stuarts, stoically bore persecu-

(1) See his edition of Langbaine's *Lives of the English Dramatic Poets*, and his letters to Prior (Longleat Mss. III, 507).

tion, unswerving in his faith as Papist and Royalist. When the Restoration came, he hoped for an ample reward for his loyalty : but, like many others, he was forgotten by the Merry Monarch. Reduced thus to comparative poverty, he was obliged to sell the best part of his estate and retire to Gillingham, where his son, Charles, was born.

Of the considerable fortune that had belonged to the family, there was little left. Charles's father, a scholar, « member of the Hon. Society of Gray's Inn » (1), resolved to give his son a liberal education, to enable him to earn an easy living. Charles was sent at first to school at Gillingham, where he got « the first rudiments of learning under a very honest and learned master, Mr Young. » But he was only nine, when his father died. His relations decided that he should enter the priesthood, « which was supposed the best support of a Gentleman whose Fortunes and Relations could promise him no greater advantage ». At fourteen, he was sent to Douai, to the « Collège des Anglois », — a college of secular priests reserved for young Englishmen. Here he stayed for 5 years and became a very good scholar in Greek and Latin. His masters, finding him zealous in his studies, hoped to make an eminent priest of him ; but « he found his inclinations point him another way » : the Muses had already won his allegiance. In 1684-5 he was back in England, waiting impatiently for his coming of age.

As soon as he was 21, he went to London, resolved to lead the gay fashionable life of his dreams. Scarcely arrived in the « Modern Babylon », he became the friend of young rakes who introduced him to all the pleasures of the Town, so that he was not long in squandering the

(1) The quotations are taken from Gildon's autobiography in the Appendix to Laugbaine's *Lives*.

remainder of the paternal estate. And, « to crown his other imprudences » (1), he was not yet 23 when, being totally ruined, he married a penniless girl, who bore him several children.

At this time he attended the meetings of wits, where he often read verses of his own making. He was a constant frequenter of the *salon* of the « famous » Mrs Behn, « the divine Astraea », who loved to gather round her all the young libertines of the town. The literary fecundity of the « incomparable Mrs Behn » was greater than that of Dryden, and was a perpetual subject of wonder to contemporary writers. Young Gildon was enthusiastic, and later, gave remarkable instances of her extraordinary fluency (2) : « Her Muse was never subject to the curse of bringing forth with Pain : for she always writ with the greatest ease in the world, and that in the midst of company and discourse of other matters. I saw her myself write *Oroonoko* (3) and keep her turn in discoursing with several present in the room. »

Gildon was also, like De Foe and Samuel Wesley (4), a member of the « Athenian Society », a literary club founded by John Dunton, the eccentric Non-conformist bookseller. Gildon was honoured with the task of writing the history of the learned society ; the work was published in 1691, and won the approval of Dunton himself, who long continued a business acquaintance with the young historian, now a writer of vogue. Dunton passed this

(1) Cibber, *Lives of the Poets*, III, 326.

(2) In the Preface to his edition of Mrs Behn's play *The younger Brother* (1696).

(3) *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave*, the famous tale which inspired a very successful tragedy of Southerne.

(4) (1662-1735), the father of the great Methodist leader.

indulgent judgment on him (1) : « Mr Gildon is well acquainted with the languages and writes with a peculiar briskness which the common Hacks can't boast of ; in regard they want the life and spirit, and the same liberty, and extent of genius. He was always very just in the Engagements where I had any concern, and his performances were done as well as the designs would admit. He writ the History of the Athenian Society which contained the just merits of that Cause. »

As Gildon advanced in age, he became more and more « dissatisfied with the tenets of the Church of Rome, that he had inbib'd with his mother's milk ». But the Catholic stamp was so deeply engraved on his mind that, as he tells us himself, « it cost him above 7 years' study and contest before he could entirely shake off all those opinions that had grown with him from a Child » (2). He followed closely the religious controversies of the reign of James the Second (1685-88), and — a fact which shows his sincerity — abandoned Roman Catholicism at a time when Papists were in great favour at Court. The sermons of Dr. Tillotson, who was later lord Archbishop of Canterbury, against Transubstantiation and the Infallibility of the Roman Church, were lent to Gildon by a lawyer « that at he same time cheated him out of 400 pounds » (3). Gildon pardoned this theft, because the discourses of the Reverend Doctor had brought peace to his soul : he definitely abjured the Roman Catholic Church, which he scornfully called thereafter « the Whore of Babylon » (4).

About this time he became acquainted with a group of

(1) Duutton's *Life and Errors*, 1705 ed., p. 241.

(2) Appendix to Langbaine's *Lives*.

(3) Appendix to Langbaine's *Lives*.

(4) See the Epistle prefixed to *The Golden Spy* (1709) and Leland's *View of the principal deistical writers* (1754).

young men, who gathered round Charles Blount, a disciple of Hobbes, and an apostle of philosophical religion (1). Tempted by the doctrine of his new friends, and irresistibly drawn by the desire — frequent among young writers — to shock the bourgeois mind, Gildon became one of the pupils and admirers of Blount ; he was soon chosen as the secretary and historiographer of the Deistical Club.

Since the loss of his fortune, Gildon earned his living by his pen : he had become a « hack-writer » or « Grubstreet author », one of the class which, in order to secure a good sale for their writings, sought noisy successes obtained through slander and blackmail, lowered their talent to the coarse tastes of the Vulgar, and, at the bidding of unscrupulous booksellers, embittered contemporary polemics by hastily-written pamphlets. Among Gildon's works published in the year 1692 (2), the most characteristic in this respect are : *The Post-boy robb'd of his Mail*, an adaptation, composed in great part by him, of some licentious letters of the Italian novelist Pallavicino (3), — and *Nuncius Infernalis*, which consists of 2 dialogues, one after the manner of Lucian, the other imitated from Machiavelli's novelle *Belfegor Arcidivolo* (4). This second part was evidently expected to

(1) He was the chief precursor of Toland. Macaulay, in his *History of England* (chapter XIX, 1693) judged him with excessive severity.

(2) See : List of Gildon's works.

(3) Ferrante Pallavicino, an Italian novelist and satirical Poet (1615-1644) who wrote the *Corriere Svaligiato* (1640). He was beheaded at Avignon as a heretic, after a life full of adventures.

(4) A satire against marriage, where the Devil is brought to admit that Hell itself is preferable to the company of a wife.

ensure the success of the whole book ; it is a good specimen of the coarse wit of the time : the Ghosts of Cuckolds of several nations — Merchants, Quakers, Lawyers, Poets, — describe their wrongs, and are finally condemned by Lucifer, Lord of Hell, to be thrown into « the cuckolds' cave, 10.000 fathoms deeper than the Whoremasters, and next the keeping Cullys, and let each have 2 wives to torment him ». The dialogue ends with these lines, obviously intended for the popular taste, spoken by Lucifer :

« For since their Grandame Eve in Eden fell,
The Sex has learnt the Damning Trade so well,
Where e'er *that* Rules, there's little need of Hell. »

From his relations with the Deists, Gildon derived some profit by publishing books on their theories which obtained the great success of all works of scandal : perhaps this consideration was not absent from his mind when he gave his adhesion to Blount's doctrines. He prepared in 1693 a Collection of letters written by the chief deists — Blount, Richardson, Yaxly, Rogers and himself — to correspondents of high rank ; he gave the Collection a sensational title, *The Oracles of Reason*. Meanwhile, Blount's suicide (August 1693) drew general attention to Gildon's little volume. The success of the *Oracles of Reason* was extraordinary. Many were the divines who, indignant at the temerity of those scorers of revealed religion, retorted in writing (1) : « It is the

(1) *A Conference with a Theist*, by William Nicholls, D. D.; 1696, 8 vo, pp. 266. — *Mr Blount's Oracles of Reason examin'd and answered*, by Josiah King, 1698. — *Moral Essays, together with an answer to some chapters in the Oracles of Reason concerning deism*, by J. Lowde, 1699. — *A Discourse concerning the being and Attributes of God, in answer to the author of the Oracles of Reason*, by S. Clarke. D. D. 1716 (5 th ed. in 1719).

first book I ever saw which did openly avow infidelity ! » exclaimed William Nicholls : and he added, with feigned disdain : « This book is chiefly made up of a few letters wrote between some Sparks at London and some Translations made out of one or two Greek and Latin books. » This religious controversy was still going on in 1719!

Gildon had sufficient business sense to grasp immediately that he had found a rich vein which should be worked without loss of time. In 1695 he collected in one volume Blount's works, to which he prefixed the biography of the famous Deist ; commenting on Blount's death, he made an extravagant apology of suicide, and in the heat of enthusiasm announced his resolution of ending his days in the same manner. Perhaps he was sincere and dreamt of martyrdom in a Cause that seemed holy to him. The *Miscellaneous Works* had not as great a success as the *Oracles of Reason*, but they were notwithstanding much discussed, and thus added somewhat to the editor's reputation.

Gildon was chosen by several booksellers as the editor of many compilations. He published with pious care the posthumous works of Mrs Behn. In a volume of *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays* he included an original *Apology for Poetry* which he dedicated to Walter Moyle (1), one of the wits of Will's coffee-house and a wealthy man. He also published *Miscellanies* of poems and maxims ; one of those collections, which appeared in 1692, *Miscellany Poems upon several Occasions*, contains some of his own work : two light pieces entitled *To Sylvia*, and a mediocre imitation of the beginning of the first satire of Persius. In the volume of 1694 — *Chorus Poetarum* — is included another of his poems : *To my friend Mr*

(1) (1672-1721) : Politician and student : a great friend of Congreve's and Dennis's.

Charles Hopkins, on reading his translations out of Ovid and Tibullus.

Thanks to his excellent education, Gildon had a competent knowledge of classical authors. This was universally recognised in his time : David Crawford, who became historiographer of Scotland, chose him to edit his *Imitations of Ovid* (1), and to write the dedication of the book to Lord Boyle. By such work Gildon was able to make a tolerable living. We know that Lintot, the enterprising bookseller who employed him as editor of the *Examen Miscellaneum*, a collection of modern verse, translations from Anacreon and maxims from Greek writers, paid him 5 l. 7 s. 6 d. on the 15 th of November 1702 (2). But the money obtained from booksellers was not the chief resource of our author : like all the writers of his time, distinguished and obscure, he dedicated his books to rich patrons who rewarded the poor writer's outrageous panegyric of their virtue and generosity with ringing gold coins. In order to be introduced to wealthy benefactors, he tried to become the friend of Tom D'Urfey (3), then at the pinnacle of fame : he addressed to him a long and learned letter, full of allusions to the ancient dramatists, in praise of his comedy *The Marriage Hater match'd*, which had been bitterly attacked by envious writers ; and D'Urfey, when he published the comedy (1692), inserted this letter as a preface. In return he wrote the preface to Gildon's first work of imagination *Nuncius Infernalis*, and undertook to introduce the young

(1) *Ovidius Britannicus* (1703) (See List of Gildon's Works).

(2) NICHOLS. *Literary Anecdotes of the 18 th Century*, 1812 ed., VIII, 293. Pope received only 7 l. for the first ed. of the *Rape of the Lock*.

(3) (1653-1723), poet and dramatist. He was the nephew of Honoré d'Urfé, author of the romance of *L'Astrée*.

writer to the literary world : « the modesty of my friend being such, that he would not venture into the world alone. »

A few years later, Gildon succeeded at last in making the acquaintance of patrons of rank. The descendants of the Earl of Rochester chose him as co-editor with Tom Brown (1) of the *Familiar Letters*, written by their ancestor the famous libertine (1697). The Earl of Dorset allowed him to publish several of his original poems (2). About 1701, Gildon was entrusted by the Duke of Buckinghamshire (3) with his *Essay on Poetry*, which had won the praise of Dryden. Gildon published it in *Examen Miscellaneum* and soon after began, under the Duke's direction, a learned commentary on the *Essay* ; but the commentary, through circumstances independent of Gildon's will, was published only after the Duke's death, in 1721.

II

Gildon's career as a playwright

Such high patronage, though profitable, brought little compared to the riches Gildon hoped to accumulate through his plays : for he had soon turned to the drama, then the only kind of literary work that yielded important profits. Already in 1694 he had been involved in a controversy concerning the English Stage. A minor critic named Rymer (4) in a pamphlet entitled : *A short*

(1) (1663-1704). A miscellaneous writer, known chiefly for his violent quarrel with D'Urley in 1699.

(2) In *A New Miscellany of Original Poems* (1701).

(3) The Duke bore only at that time the title of Marquis of Normanby (see the Preface to *the Laws of Poetry*; 1721).

(4) (1641-1713), known chiefly as the editor of *Fœdera*.

view of Tragedy : its original Excellency and Corruption : with some Reflections on Shakespeare and other Practitioners for the Stage (1692) pretended to scorn the Shakespearcan Art and called *Othello* « a bloody farce without salt or savour ». Gildon defended Shakespeare, claiming that he was a great dramatist (1) ; he did not, however, admire him unreservedly, for he was ever very severe in his judgment of others, and declared that Shakespeare was not classical enough. It is curious to remark what he singles out for praise : « Of all Shakespeare's characters », he wrote (2), « I like his clown best : he always speaks Truth, therefore I am pleased with his freedom ; he shuns all Complaisance, therefore I doat on him for his rusticity. Methinks it comes nearest to Nature and Honesty : our Reason was given us to judge of Things, and our Tongues to declare that Judgment ». He agreed with Rymer that *Othello* was not a good play, because one dramatist cannot succeed in painting different passions (3) : « Shakespeare that drew *Othello* so finely has made but a scurvy piece of *Desdemona*. » Shakespeare never was Gildon's model : Lee (4) and Otway (5) appealed more to his taste.

Gildon began his dramatic career very prudently. Mrs

(1) He wrote *Reflections on Mr Rymer's Short View*, in an Essay dedicated to Dryden and inserted in his *Miscellaneous Letters* (1694) (pp. 64 to 118). As M. Huchon rightly surmises (See *Mrs Montague and her friends*, p. 93 n.) it is undoubtedly by Gildon.

(2) *A comparison between the 2 Stages* (Drury Lane, and Lincoln's Inn Fields) : Pref.

(3) *Love's Victim* : Pref.

(4) (1653-1692) : he followed Dryden's method in his most successful tragedy, the *Rival Queens* (1677).

(5) (1652-1685) : two of his tragedies, the *Orphan*, and *Venice Preserved*, still keep the stage.

Behn had left him the manuscript of a comedy, the *Younger Brother, or the Amorous Jill*, which she had written hastily in the presence of her admirers. In 1696, through Gildon's efforts, it was played at the Royal Theatre ; Gildon suppressed many tedious passages and carefully altered a few political reflections, but, in spite of these changes, the play was a failure. Gildon hastened to explain (1) : « Out of respect to her Memory and a deference which was too nice to her Judgment, he [Gildon] durst not make any alterations in it, but what were absolutely necessary, and then only in the first and second acts which reflected on the Whigs — when, if he had alter'd the jejune style of the 3 last acts betwixt Prince Frederick and Mirtilla, which was too heavy, in all probability it would have been more to the Advantage of his Purse ». To obtain some reward for his work, he published the comedy in its entirety, with a short biography, very agreeably and briskly written, of the famous authoress (2). The edition was quickly sold, as the name of the « incomparable Mrs Behn » on the title-page of a book was always a sufficient passport to success.

In the following year, Gildon having increased confidence in his own talents, produced in the same theatre his first tragedy the *Roman Bride's Revenge*. He explained its failure by its hurried composition (3) : « The *Roman Bride's Revenge* was writ in one month, so it had the fate of those untimely births : as hasty a Death. » It was a mediocre classical tragedy, in which

(1) and (3) See his autobiography (appendix to Langbaine's *Lives*) and Genest's *History of the English Stage*, II, 112.

(2) He dedicated the book to a friend of Creech and Dennis, Colonel Codrington (1668-1710) who, by this time, had acquired the reputation of a wit and a scholar.

Gildon tried, without success, to imitate the style of « fiery Lee » (1). Though admitting defects in his play, he was proud both of its complex plot, which was entirely of his own invention except for a hint taken from *Camma of Galata* (2), — and of the bloody catastrophe which Lee would have much approved : « the Moral is one of the most noble of any of our Modern Plays, it being to give us an example in the Punishment of Martian that no consideration in the World ought to make us delay the service of our country ». (3)

In 1698, Gildon obtained a creditable success with *Phaeton, or the Fatal Divorce*, a tragedy, which ran several nights at the Royal Theatre. The plot was taken from a French opera of the same title by Quinault, but Gildon modified Quinault's conception after a close study of Euripides' dramatic style in *Medea*, and blended the character of Phaeton in a strange manner with that of Jason (4). Proud of the success, which he certainly deserved, Gildon published the tragedy, dedicating it to the Right Honourable Charles Montague, Chancellor of the Exchequer. He added a refutation of Collier's famous pamphlet *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*.

Eager to retain his new popularity, Gildon turned *Measure for Measure* into an opera ; the historian Old-

(1) This expression is borrowed from Dennis's preface to Gildon's tragedy *The Patriot* (1703).

(2) *Camma, reine de Galatie*, a tragedy by Thomas Corneille, first played at the Hotel de Bourgogne on Jan. 28 th, 1661. Published in the same year.

(3) See the Appendix to Laugbaine's *Lives*.

(4) See a favourable judgment of this tragedy in Genest's *History* II, 138.

mixon (1) wrote a prologue and an epilogue (2), the famous actor Betterton took the part of Angelo, and the composer Purcell (3) wrote the music. Gildon simplified Shakespeare's plot and introduced masques and musical entertainments at the end of every act : dances of wizards and witches, or of tritons and nereids, disfigure Shakespeare's poignant drama. In this Gildon was only following the example of D'Avenant (4), who had already, in 1662, altered the play to suit contemporary taste, giving it the title of *Law against Lovers*. Gildon's opera, which had a fair success, was played at Lincoln's Inn Fields, which had just been opened by Betterton. (5)

But it was in 1701 that Gildon obtained his only real theatrical triumph with his tragedy *Love's Victim, or the Queen of Wales* (6), also produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Gildon's model for the dramatic structure was Otway, whose panegyric he wrote in the preface to the play ; he had obeyed Betterton's suggestions, and combined the rigid classical tragedy with operatic elements such as processions of druids on the stage, magnificent scenery, and the frequent use of thunderstorms. This tragedy brought Gildon what he most desired, financial

(1) John Oldmixon (1673-1742) began his literary career as a poet, and in 1700 produced at Drury Lane an opera *The Grove*, with music by D. Purcell.

(2) Supposed to be spoken by Shakespeare's Ghost.

(3) Not Henry Purcell, but his less famous brother Daniel (1660-1717).

(4) (1606-1658), the well-known dramatist who mangled many of Shakespeare's plays.

(5) Strangely enough, this opera was advertised in the edition of Gildon's tragedy *Love's Victim* as *Measure for Measure*, a comedy alter'd from *Beaumont and Fletcher*, by Mr Gilden.

(6) See an analysis of the play in Genest's *History*, II, 246.

success, and also the protection of Lord Halifax to whom it was dedicated.

In 1702, Gildon wrote an adaptation of Lcc's *Junius Brutus*, which had been forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain as being an « antimonarchical play » (1), after it had run for three nights (1681). Gildon transported the scene from Rome to Florence, and made Cosmo di Medici the hero instead of Brutus : for the Master of the Revels had refused to license his first adaptation of the play, in which he had merely suppressed « all reflections on Monarchy » (2). Under its new title *The Patriot, or the Italian Conspiracy*, Gildon's tragedy — with the addition of songs composed by Daniel Purcell (3) — was relatively successful. The Prologue was written by John Dennis (4), with whom Gildon was to entertain close relations for the rest of his life ; the Epilogue, by the famous Farquhar (5). Encouraged by these renowned patrons, Gildon, when he published his play in 1703, boldly dedicated it to the Queen ; the Duke of Leeds presented it to Her Majesty, at the same time asking her to reward the author. The Queen immediately wrote to her tyrannical counsellor, the Duchess of Marlborough, keeper of the Privy Purse « to ask her how much would be proper ». (6)

(1) Some lines on the effeminacy and immorality of Tarquin had been interpreted as a reflection on Charles the Second.

(2) See the Preface to the tragedy, and Genest's *History*, II, 276.

(3) This day is published a set of airs in 4 parts, perform'd in the tragedy call'd *The Italian Conspiracy*, written by Mr Dan. Purcell. 1 s. 6 d. (Advertisement in the papers for Dec. 1 st, 1702).

(4) John Dennis (1657-1734), Pope's victim and bitterest enemy.

(5) George Farquhar (1678-1707), the famous actor and playwright.

(6) *Hist. Mss. Comm.* 8 th Report, p. 51.

We do not know how much Gildon received from his Sovereign, but it is not likely that the rapacious Duchess was, contrary to her habits, generously inclined towards an obscure playwright.

During the last years of William the Third's reign, Gildon's reputation as a dramatic critic was firmly established. The booksellers Thomas Leigh and William Turner commissioned him to re-write and complete the biographical dictionary published in 1691 by Langbaine (1) under the following title : *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets*. He was also chosen by the enemies of Bevil Higgons (2), a poor Jacobite writer, to ridicule his tragedy, the *Generous Conqueror* ; to merciless criticism of the play, Gildon added general ideas concerning the English stage : he extolled Shakespeare and Jonson, attacked Dryden for lack of originality, and reproached Steele for not being sufficiently classical.

About this time, Gildon was the intimate of most of the great living authors, and of renowned actors and actresses : Mrs Bracegirdle (3), Mrs Porter (4), and Betterton (5),

(1) Gerard Langbaine, the Younger (1656-1692), known chiefly as a dramatic biographer.

(2) Higgons (1670-1735) was accused, when he published his tragedy, of having tried to defend the Divine Right and Impeccability of James the Second. Gildon's book against him is entitled : *A Comparison between the 2 Stages* (1702).

(3) Anne Bracegirdle's (1663-1748) appearance in Gildon's *Love's Victim* (1701) was one of her greatest triumphs, and Gildon thanked her in the Preface to his tragedy. This did not prevent him, a few months afterwards, from giving the following opinion of her virtue : « I believe no more on it than I believe of John Mandevil ». (*A Comparison*, etc. p. 18).

(4) In Gildon's tragedy, *Love's Victim*, she played the part of Tyrelius, a boy of 12, and spoke the Epilogue. She died in 1765.

(5) Gildon's *Life of Betterton* is rather a dissertation on

who played the chief part in all his plays, and whose biography he wrote a few weeks after the great actor's death in 1710. It is very likely, too, that he himself played secondary parts in his tragedies, according to a frequent custom at the time (1). He probably was an indifferent player. He certainly was an indifferent dramatist, though at least honest in indicating his models and sources, and he does not perhaps deserve Young's severe satire of his talent in the *Love of Fame* : (2)

« (Hence) Gildon rails, that raven of the pit
Who thrives upon the carcasses of wit ».

Gildon's relations with actresses did not help to improve the detestable reputation he had acquired from his connections with the Deists. He led, in fact, a very dissolute life. De Foe, always self-indulgent but hard upon others, branded Gildon's vices in doggerel lines, in a poem entitled *More Reformation* (July 1703) :

« G—— writes Satyr, rails at Blasphemy,
And the next Page, lampoons the Deity ;
Exposes his Darinda's Vicious Life,
But keeps six whores and starves his modest wife ;
Sets up for a reformer of the town,
Himself a first Rate Rake below Lampoon...
All men to errors and mistakes enclin'd,
To sin's a vice in Nature, and we find

drama and the dramatic art : to it was added a comedy by Betterton *The Amorous Widow* (imitated from Molière) which had been successfully acted on the 10 th of January 1673. ,See *Times L. S. for Sept. 14 th, 1922* : p. 584).

(1) Waller. *Universal Biography*.

(2) This is Edward Young (1683-1765), the author of the *Nights*. The quotation is taken from the seventh satire of the *Love of Fame*.

And Reprehension 's not at all uncivil,
But to have Rakes reprove us, that's the Devil ! »

Evidently, in these outspoken lines, De Foe is merely exaggerating stories that were commonly reported of Gildon's life ; his cynical behaviour and youthful bluster contributed certainly to give credence to those rumours. But the attacks against his private conduct became so violent, that he felt bound to protest, though at the same time he admitted his incredulity in matters of religion. In the preface to *Chorus Poetarum* he wrote, in answer to slanders spread by his adversaries : « I confess I was sensibly touch'd with the Scandalous Judgment those Gentlemen made of my morals, which I do without Arrogance pretend to be as orthodox as any Man's, how Heterodox soever my other opinions may be thought by some ». But the mere fact that he proclaimed himself a deist was sufficient to make good souls reckon him among the worst rakes, and it undoubtedly injured him financially, as it turned away the patronage of rich and influential lords. As he advanced in age, his youthful enthusiasm for doctrines which seemed revolutionary and subversive to most Englishmen gave way to his practical sense. Little by little he turned to the Established Church, and allowed himself to be converted by Charles Leslie's (1) poor arguments in favour of Christianity, contained in a long pamphlet with this cumbrous title : *A Short and Easy Method with the Deists, wherein the truth of the Christian Religion is demonstrated by such rules as stand upon the conviction of our outward Senses,*

(1) (1650-1722). Non-juror and controversialist, known for his quarrels with the Quakers and the chief Whig journalists of the time, Tutchin and De Foe, in opposition to whom he started a paper entitled *The Rehearsal*. The first edition of his *Short and Easy Method* was issued in 1698.

and which are incompatible with the Fabulous Histories of the Heathen Deities, the Delusions of Mahomet, or any other Imposture whatsoever.

Resolved to reap the utmost benefit from his conversion, Gildon proclaimed it widely. In July 1704, Leslie addressed to him a long gratulatory letter, and the new proselyte wrote a treatise, the *Deist's Manual*, in which he abjured all his former errors. He dedicated this production to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thus back in the ranks of loyal English Protestants, Gildon easily found lucrative work. The Whigs and Tories, at this time, were waging a terrible newspaper war, and each was eager to enrol new pamphleteers in his service. Gildon had no fixed political opinions, and let it be known that he was ready to offer his talent to whatever party felt inclined to reward his labours.

III

Gildon as pamphleteer

Gildon's first political pamphlet showed him that he was treading dangerous ground. The High-Tory leaders were at this time greatly incensed against the Queen for having raised a Whig ministry to power. They knew her secret attachment to her exiled brother, the Pretender, and resolved to take their revenge by balking her hopes. On the 15th of November 1705, they brought forward in Parliament a proposal that Anne should invite to England the Heir Presumptive to the throne, the Electress Sophia. Thus they affronted the Queen publicly, and at the same time threw confusion into the ranks of the Whigs, who were greatly alarmed by this suspicious zeal for the Protestant Succession. The Tories hoped that

by this move they would cause a quarrel between the reigning Queen and the Queen to be — the touchy and dominating character of the latter was well known — and that they might take advantage of the trouble that would ensue to return to power themselves (1). Their plan failed, but they had the good fortune to lay their hands on two very important letters. One, dated Nov. 3rd, 1705, had been sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Princess Sophia, and seemed to intimate her wish to visit England, so as to be ready in case of Anne's sudden death. The other had been sent on Jan. 12th, 1706, to the Earl of Stanford by Sir Rowland Gwynne, an English Gentleman at the Court of Hanover : Gwynne showed that in order to baffle the endeavours of the Jacobites, it was necessary that the Electress should come to England, and he expressed plainly a suspicion of the loyalty of the Queen and her Ministers towards the Protestant Succession. Both letters were given by a Tory leader to poor Gildon, who saw how much money their publication would bring in. Not suspecting that he was being used as a tool by the Tories in their war against the Queen, he published the letters, and added a review of those sensational documents, in which he dwelt at length on the advantages that would ensue from Sophia's visit. Urged perhaps by the Tories, he even dedicated his pamphlet, with a touching ingenuity, to the Queen. The result soon appeared. His work was censured by both Houses and declared « a seditious libel, tending to create a misunderstanding between Her Majesty and the Princess Sophia ». The author of the libel was easily discovered ; Gildon indeed did not seek concealment. On June 8th,

(1) In the old *Histoire d'Angleterre* by Rapiu-Thoyras (1749) these curious negotiations are very clearly explained. (vol. XII, p. 170, etc).

1706, the Secretary of State, Robert Harley, issued a warrant thus worded : « Charles Gildon to be apprehended for being concern'd in publishing a seditious libel ». (1) On the 14th, Harley issued a second warrant to the keeper of Newgate, ordering him to receive the culprit, who had been examined and confessed his guilt. Without further delay, Harley announced Gildon's arrest to the English Ambassador in Hanover, Mr Howe : « I do not know what Sir Rowland Gwyn does at Hamburg », he wrote (2), « but one Charles Gildon who has printed a book to justify Sir Rowland Gwyn's letter, and impudently dedicated it to the Queen is committed to Newgate. He was the person who reprinted Sir Rowland Gwyn's letter: he takes the writing of the book upon himself, but it may be he will be obliged to produce the true author or authors ere long. »

The hope expressed by the astute minister, who sought to reach his political enemies in this way, was never realised : Gildon did not inform against any one, perhaps because he did not know whom to denounce or because he feared revenge. On the 18th of June, he wrote to Harley's secretary, Erasmus Lewis (3), « desiring to know whether he would be pleased to take his bail, as Mr Stephen had satisfied Mr Borrett (4), having two very substantial men, one with five or six thousand pounds ; the other, besides his trade in the bookselling, has a place of 50 l. a year for his life » (5). This offer was accepted, and Gildon did not remain long

(1) *Public Record Office, S. P. dom. Annæ.* Entry book 77.

(2) Letter dated 18/29 June 1706 (*P. R. O. — S. P. foreign.* Hanover, entry book).

(3) (1670-1754), a friend of Swift and Pope.

(4) Solicitor to the Treasury.

(5) *Hist. Mss. Comm. — Mss of the Duke of Portland,* VIII, 232.

- *Circled in Newgate's cold embrace* » (1).

He was tried on the 12 th of February 1707 at the Guildhall, and found guilty (2). Sentence was deferred till the following term. Terrified by the mere idea of the pillory and prison, Gildon sought a protector everywhere : he applied to Richard Steele, who had just been appointed gazetteer, on the recommendation of Arthur Mainwaring (3). Honest, kind-hearted Dick Steele was always ready to help a brother-writer in distress. He wrote to the Queen, on behalf of Gildon, a petition for a *Noli Prosequi*, the first draught of which, in his own hand, has been preserved in his papers (4) : « To the Queen's most Excellent Majesty. The humble Petition of Charles Gildon sheweth. That y^r Petitioner has by an unhappy mistake and not out of any malicious design against the Happiness and Quiet of y^r Majesty's Government been concern'd in publishing a pamphlet call'd *S^r R. Gwinn's letter etc.* That y^r Pet^r has had a liberal education and fortune and expects this Term a sentence worse than Death for the same. That he is under the greatest sorrow and contrition for this His high offense against so good and gracious a Queen, and shall hereafter abhor and avoid all license in speech and writing unbecoming a quiet, humble, and Peaceable subject. Y^r Pet^r therefore most humbly Prays, etc. » Harley received this petition on the 2 nd of May ; he read it on the 4 th, and wrote a short note on the paper : « He

(1) *De Foe, Elegy on the Author of the True-born Englishman.*

(2) *Post boy*, Feb. 13 th, 1707.

(3) (1668-1712). M. P., auditor of inquests, member of the Kit-Kat Club, one of the heads of the Whig Party.

(4) *British Museum. Add. Mss.* 5145. This document has been pointed out by Aitken, *Life of Steele*, I, 152.

to apply again after sentence » (1). At last, on the 17 th, Gildon appeared before the Bench. The judge soon gathered that he had been merely a tool, ignorant of the grave significance of his act. Gildon escaped imprisonment, but was condemned to a fine of 100 l., a large sum for a poor hack-writer. On the 27 th of November, we find him sending a new petition to Harley, to be relieved from his fine (2), and we may believe that this request was granted, since it was presented by Mainwaring, who was very powerful with the ministers.

Gildon had learnt from his misfortunes the danger of meddling with politics ; henceforward he behaved like « a quiet and peaceable subject », and paid court to men in office. He cherished the hope of being appointed, like De Foe, to some minor official post. In July 1708, he wrote a poem in praise of Marlborough's victory at Oudenarde, and to obtain pardon for his past offence, dedicated it to the Electoral Prince of Hanover, afterwards George the First. He kept up more studiously than ever his acquaintances with men of renown, both in the literary and political world. He frequently visited « ancient Mr Wycherley », who was still held in reverence by the wits ; in one of these visits he met the youthful Pope, whom he described later as a « little Aesopic sort of an Animal », — which, naturally enough, incensed the touchy poet (3). He remained on good terms with Steele to whom, in gratitude for his kindness, he dedicated his *Life of Betterton* : « The following piece was scarce yet an Embryo », he wrote, « when I designed its full growth for your Protection. » In return, Steele, under his favourite pseudonym

(1) *Mss. of the Duke of Portland*, VIII, 349.

(2) *Mss. of the Duke of Portland*, VIII, 353.

(3) In the *Life of William Wycherley* : the quarrel between Pope and Gildon makes the subject of my 4 th chapter.

of Isaac Bickerstaff (1), wrote the following humorous preface for a *Grammar of the English Tongue*, which Gildon began, in 1710, at the request of a bookseller named Brightland : « The following treatise being submitted to my censure, that I may pass it with Integrity, I must declare that as Grammar in general is on all hands allow'd the Foundation of all Arts and Sciences, so it appears to me that this Grammar of the English Tongue has done that justice to our language which till now it never obtained. The Text will improve the most ignorant, and the notes will employ the more learned. I therefore enjoin all my female Correspondents to buy, read and study this Grammar, that their letters may be something less enigmatic ; and on all my male Correspondents likewise, who make no conscience of false-spelling and False-English, I lay the same Injunction, on pain of having their epistles expos'd in their own proper dress, in my Lucubrations. — I. B. censor. » Gildon hoped much from the success of this grammar, which was dedicated « To the Queen's most excellent Majesty ». He contributed also to a translation of Lucian's works, and wrote a Latin Grammar (2). He thought these academic treatises likely to recommend him to the great minister Harley, who had returned to power after a short eclipse. There are extant two letters of Gildon to the famous statesman (3) (1711).

(1) It was under this pseudonym that Steele wrote for the *Tatler* (1709). The name Isaac Bickerstaff had already been assumed by Swift when he attacked John Partridge the almanac-maker (1707), and it was, later on, taken by De Foe when he wrote his mock-prophecies, the *British Visions* (1711).

(2) This is evidently *Cases in Latin*, 3 copies of which Gildon sent to Addison in Feb. 1719 (*B. M. Mss. E. G.* 1971).

(3) *B. M. Add. Mss.* 4163.

He began by declaring that « he knew Harley's own excellent parts, and the character he had of a Favourer of Men of letters and his generosity to such », then went on to explain a series of projects which, he said, would enable Harley to earn an eternal reputation as a « Great Protector of Arts and Sciences ». The first of Gildon's projects was for the promotion of virtue and morality : « Some ingenious person was to compose a Speech with all the flowers of Oratory and Rhetoric, and then he himself, if duly qualified, or another person indued with all the Graces and advantages of speaking was to pronounce it in a house to be built for that purpose in the centre of Lincoln's Inn Square » (1). Gildon obviously repented the license of his theatrical career, since this project tended to create opposition against the stage, by means of moralizing lectures destined to « advance the polite Sciences. » Another proposal of Gildon was for the founding of an English Academy on the same lines as the French : the idea was by no means novel. Roscommon had already brought it forward (2), then De Foe in his *Essay upon Projects* (1697) and Prior in his *Carmen Seculare* (1700) ; and a few months after Gildon, Swift made exactly the same proposal in his *Letter to the Earl of Oxford* (Harley). Gildon's last project was intended by him to prejudice in his

(1) This project was not fully explained in Gildon's first letter to Harley, but we know in what it consisted from a passage of *A Reinforcement of the Reasons proving that the Stage is an Antichristian Diversion* (Oct. 1733, p. 31), by the Rev. George Anderson, who was a friend of Gildon's, and probably influenced his sudden dislike for the stage.

(2) Dillon Wantworth, Earl of Roscommon had attempted the formation of a literary Academy in imitation of that at Caen, in which town he had lived, during the Commonwealth. He was a classical poet (1633-85) and, according to Pope, the only moral writer of the reign of the Merry Monarch.

favour Harley, who was a specialist in economic questions. To induce the great statesman to grant him an audience, Gildon declared himself ready to lay before him « a method of Improving Her Majesty's Revenue 50.000 or 60.000 l. per an. without injury to any one » ; he does not give any more details of this marvellous project. He sent with his letters copies of his books, at least of those he thought likely to interest Harley, for example, his *Grammar*, for which he shamelessly claimed a reward in cash : « I have yet had no benefit of any consequence from the great pains and labour I have been at in this work but the hopes of a public service, and wish that my circumstances did not compel me to seek any other. But since those are so narrow I hope from our true Patriots another Reward more agreable to the necessity of my affairs » : and he went on to insinuate that among those patriots, Robert Harley, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was the most likely to be generous.

At the same time, in order to obtain support for his demands, Gildon sent some of his books to Edward Harley, brother of the Minister, « to divert a leisure hour » (1). He tried to interest him also in his proposals, which, he repeated, were designed « to advance the polite Arts to a greater perfection than they have yet known in these nations. » This clever campaign probably did not fulfil the extravagant hopes entertained by Gildon, who was far from being modest. It is very likely, however, that he received some money, for at the end of his life we find him, poorer and more beggarly than ever, sending new petitions to the Harley family, through the medium of their great friend Prior.

During the reign of Queen Anne, a poor hack-writer like Gildon was at the mercy of rapacious booksellers,

(1) *B. M. Add. Mss.* 4163.

who compelled him to lead a life of drudgery and semi-starvation, so that he had little time for original work. In 1709, Gildon was the chief contributor to two collections of anecdotes entitled the *Golden Spy*, dedicated to Swift : these were stories tending to show the corruptive power of gold in European Courts, and telling with many details the « scandalous amours » of Fouquet, Mme de Montpensier, and other worthies of the Court of Versailles. In 1710 Gildon came under the tyranny of Curll, a bookseller famous for his piracies and his obscene publications, who was justly vilified by De Foe in a well-known paper (1) : « he is odious in his person, scandalous in his Fame, he is mark'd by Nature, for he has a bawdy Countenance, and a debauched Mien, his Tongue is an Echo of all the beastly Language his Shop is fill'd with, and Filthiness drivels in the very Tone of his Voice. » Curll hired poor, starving Gildon to add to Rowe's six-volume edition of Shakespeare (2) a piratical seventh volume, containing Shakespeare's Poems. Gildon was very successful in this task (3). He wrote an essay on the drama in Ancient Literature and in England, compiled a Glossary of archaic words in Shakespeare, and added summaries of the plays. The book, which was dedicated to the Earl of Peterborough, would be far from contemptible, if Shakespeare's Sonnets were not lost amid a flood of inferior poetry by other authors.

(1) *Against the Sin of Curlicism*, in *Mist's Journal* for April 5 th, 1719. — Curll (1675-1747) replied in a pamphlet entitled *Curlicism Displayed*. He was attacked in the *Dun-ciad*:

(2) Rowe (1674-1718) was poet-laureate. His intimacy with Pope had exposed him to Curll's hatred. His edition of Shakespeare was reissued in 1714 in 8 vols., when Curll again issued Gildon's work as a 9 th vol.

(3) *Notes and Queries*. 2 nd s. XII, 349.

Gildon seems to have been one of the miserable hacks regularly employed by Curll. He lived in a garret in Chancery Lane, and his nightly drudgery by candle-light began to affect his eyesight. His letters to Harley (1711) show that already he could scarcely see what he wrote. Gradually his sight grew worse, and by the end of the year 1718 he was blind.

It was at the precise moment when, to the anguish of the struggle for his daily bread, was added the terror of being less and less able to see the paper he was obliged to cover with hurried lines all day long and a great part of the night, that he found himself launched into a quarrel with the most formidable antagonist of the time, Alexander Pope. He was one of the « distinguished Frogs of Helicon », that tried in vain to devour the dread « Wasp of Twickenham » (1).

IV

Gildon's quarrel with Pope, and last days

Gildon's first attack against Pope was made in 1714 : perhaps it was due not merely to natural antipathy, but to the fact that any book written against Pope was sure of a prompt answer, and hence of a good sale, since the public was always interested in literary polemics. In the *New Rehearsal* (2) — a very dull comedy — Gildon bitterly

(1) These curious expressions are taken from the *Daily Journal* (April and May 1728), which had begun a violent quarrel with Pope.

(2) The epigraph of this pamphlet is significant in itself :

« Why is he honour'd with a Poet's Name,
Who neither knows nor would observe a rule ? »

(Roscommon).

criticised the plays of Rowe, Pope's great friend, whom he described under the name of Bays the Younger in these insulting terms : « A Pedantic Reciting Poet, admired by the Mob and himself, but justly contemn'd by Men of Sense and Learning, and a despiser of Rules and Art. » Pope was introduced in the same work as « Sawney (1) Dapper, a young Poet of the Modern Stamp, an easy versifier, conceited, and a contemner secretly of all others. » To enrage Pope further, Gildon added scurrilous abuse of the *Rape of the Lock*. Pope was very touchy on this special point, as the poem was his most cherished work : De Foe had incurred his rage, and earned a niche in the *Dunciad* merely because he had ventured on a few slight taunts about sylphs and gnomes (2). So we may well imagine Pope's fury at seeing himself and his friend thus insulted by a low hack-writer.

Gildon renewed his attack a few years later. He had become the faithful jackal of the bilious critic John Dennis, who probably aided him to find work with the booksellers. Dennis certainly collaborated with him in one of his most discreditable productions, *A true character of Mr Pope*, published by Curll in 1716 (3). But the worst was yet to come. On the 3rd of May, 1718, the *Evening Post* announced the publication of the *Life of William Wycherley, Esq* (4) ; by Charles Gildon Gent., with a

(1) Sawney is a corruption of Sandy, the Scottish abbreviation of Alexander.

(2) In *A System of Magic* (1726). Already in *The Life of Mr Duncan Campbell* (1720), De Foe published verses by a certain Mr Stanhope, intended to ridicule Pope's poem.

(3) In the first edition of his *Key to the Dunciad*, Curll declared that Gildon was the author of the book. This declaration was omitted in subsequent editions, and in the *Curliad*, Dennis was named as the writer.

(4) Wicherley had died on the 1st of Jan. 1776. On the title-

character of Mr Wycherley and his writings by the Lord Landsdown. To which are added some familiar Letters written by Mr Wycherley and a true copy of his last Will and Testament. Price 1 s. Printed for E. Curll (1). The following paragraph in the book was calculated to incense Pope to the highest degree : Gildon recounts a meeting with Pope in Wycherley's chambers, and speaks scornfully of Pope's « rustick parent » about the time of the sudden death of the latter : « I remember I was once to wait on Mr Wycherley and found in his Chamber this little Acsopic sort of an Animal, in his own cropt Hair, and Dress agreeable to the Forest he came from. I confess the Gentleman was very silent all my stay there, and scarce utter'd three Words on any Subject we talk'd of, nor cou'd I guess at what sort of Creature he was, and shou'd indeed have guess'd all the Pretenses of Mankind round before I shou'd have imagined him a Wit and Poet. I thought indeed he might be some Tenant's Son of his, who might make his Court for continuance in his Lease on the Death of his Rustick Parent, but was sufficiently surpris'd when Mr Wycherley afterwards told me he was Poetically inclin'd and wrote tolerably smooth Verses... » Gildon continues in this abusive tone for five whole pages.

This was the book to which Pope referred, when, in

page of the book, Gildon is not named (see List of Gildon's works). The public was intended to suppose that Lord Landsdowne was the author of the whole. This was one of Curll's favourite tricks.

(1) In Gildon's work, Wycherley's poetry was roughly handled, a fact which displeased Dennis, so that, later, Gildon had to apologise : « I am sorry I have not pleased you in what I have said of Mr Wycherley » (Letter dated Aug. 11 th, 1721, and published by Dennis in his *Remarks upon several Passages in the Preliminaries to the Dunciad*, etc.).

order to explain plausibly his final rupture with Addison, he made to Spence (1) the following justification of his conduct : « Gildon wrote a thing about Wycherley in which he had abused both me and my relations very grossly. Lord Warwick himself told me one day that it was in vain for me to endeavour to be well with Mr Addison, that his jealous temper could never admit of a settled friendship between us ; and, to convince me of what he had said, assured me that Addison had encouraged Gildon to publish those scandals, and had given him ten guineas after they were published ». And Nichols in his *Illustrations of the Literary History of the 18th century* asserts plainly : « Gildon abused Mr P(ope) very scandalously in an anonymous pamphlet of the *Life of Mr Wycherley* printed by Curll » (2). It is curious to find that the biographers of Pope and Addison agree unanimously that this *Life of Wycherley*, from which we quote, had never existed outside Pope's malignant imagination (3). Pope's allegations had a firm basis, but his hostility to Addison had shown itself long before the *Life of Wycherley* appeared, for the famous attack on Addison under the character of Atticus dates from July 1715, and was provoked by the fact that Addison encouraged Tickell, author of a translation of the Iliad which was intended to compete with Pope's translation. It may be, however, that, after hearing Warwick's story, Pope sent di-

(1) Spence (1699-1768) related this bit of scandal in his invaluable *Anecdotes* (p. 148). It was also recounted in similar terms by Warburton in his comments on Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1751 ed. of Pope's *Works*, IV, 25-27).

(2) 1817 ed. vol. II, 727 n.

(3) See for example Mr Courthope's *Addison* (VII) and the D. N. B.

rectly to Addison a copy of the extract on the character of Atticus (1).

It remains to inquire into the truth of Pope's allegation, and to see if he had any serious reasons for believing the Earl of Warwick's gossip. It seems he had, — for there is extant a letter, dated the 12 th of February 1719, which Gildon dictated to his amanuensis and sent to Addison (2). This letter proves that there had been relations of some kind between the two men : Gildon alludes to past correspondence, and reminds Addison that he had sent him one of his books as a New Year gift, and is still waiting for « the relief which Justice required to his sufferings » ; he adds that he is troubled by some rumours according to which the collection of letters he sent him had given him offence. Finally, « to incite his native generosity to be the more active in his cause », he sends him 3 copies of his *Cases in Latin*, in the hope that Addison, still powerful with the government which he had just left on account of ill-health, would undertake to procure for him a small annuity. It is very likely that Addison, who loved to appear a generous patron, sent 10 guineas to Gildon in answer to this appeal. But was the money sent because Gildon had abused Pope in the *Life of Wycherley* ? It is very doubtful : Addison, it is true, never felt any sympathy for Pope, and probably read Gildon's attack with pleasure. It may be that Lord War-

(1) I had long concluded that Gildon's *Life of Wycherley* must be in existence, and had traced a copy in the New-York Public Library, when I found I had been forestalled by Mr George Sherburn, who described Gildon's book in a very interesting communication to the *Times L. S.* for May 11 th, 1922. But all the facts recounted in these pages about Addison's attitude in the quarrel are new.

(2) B. M. Mss. E. G. 1971.

wick, Addison's brother-in-law, knew of the gift of money to Gildon. He may, during a temporary estrangement with Addison, in order to be revenged on him, have told Pope, either in good faith or maliciously, that the money was given for the purpose he alleged, knowing that Pope was not likely to let such an injury pass unpunished. It is quite certain that Pope had no reason to doubt the truth of Lord Warwick's story.

Pope considered Gildon a contemptible enemy, and did not reply with the virulence which the poor hack-writer desired, in order to promote the sale of his books. Gildon, Pope thought, was an insignificant satellite of Dennis, for whom also he affected the greatest disdain :

*« If Dennis writes and rails in furious pet,
I'll answer Dennis when I am in debt.
If meagre Gildon draws his meaner quill,
I wish the man a dinner, and sit still » (1).*

A curious fact is that Dennis was ashamed of Gildon's friendship and deemed it convenient to deny his close relations with him ; he published two letters written to him by Gildon, the respectful tone of which, he maintained, sufficiently showed that the writer was not an intimate friend of his. « Now, is it not plain », Dennis claimed, « that any one who sends such compliments to another, has not been us'd to write in Partnership with him to whom he sends them? » (2) And yet both writers had jointly published, on the 5th of February 1720, a polemical work entitled *A New Project for the Regulation of the Stage, by Mr D-nis and Mr G-don*. The authors supported the Lord Chamberlain in his quarrel with Steele,

(1) *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. In later editions the word *venal* was substituted for *meaner*.

(2) *Remarks upon several Passages, etc.* (1729).

whose license to play at Drury Lane theatre had just been suppressed for « great misbehaviour ». Gildon's ingratitude towards his former patron met with success, as a second edition of the book was issued 3 days after the first (1). Indeed, Pope was right in uniting Gildon and Dennis, both workers under Curll's rod, in the same shameful immortality in the *Dunciad* :

« He [*Eusden*] sleeps among the dull of ancient days,
Safe, where no critics damn, no duns molest,
Where wretched Withers, Ward and Gildon rest... »
[(I, 294)].

« Ah Dennis, Gildon ah ! what ill-starr'd rage
Divides a friendship long confirm'd by age ?
Blockheads with reason wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barbarous civil war.
Embrace, embrace, my sons ! be foes no more !
Nor glad vile poets with true critics' gore ! » (2).
[(III, 173)].

Pope, however, underrated Gildon ; for one of the latter's works, the *Complete Art of Poetry*, which was published in 1728 a few weeks before he became completely blind, shows that he had real merit as a critic. Pope, who could not appreciate a book which aimed so many poisoned shafts at his poetical kingship, might have said with justice that Gildon had but poorly applied in his works the rules he prescribed so clearly. We must acknowledge, however, that Gildon has at least summed up adequately the chief principles of classical art ; he possessed erudition, though he was often pedantic in the display of it.

(1) Advertisement in the *Daily Post* for Feb. 8th, 1720.

(2) For all these « dunces » see the *Remarks on the Dunciad*.

The *Complete Art of Poetry* consists of 5 dialogues, the titles of which show the spirit of the whole work :

1. Of the Nature, Use, Excellence, Rise and Progress of Poetry ;

2. Of the Use and Necessity of Rules in Poetry ;

3. Of the Manner, Rules and Art of composing Epigrams, Pastorals, Odes, etc. ;

4. Of Tragedy and Comedy ; how to draw the Plot from the characters of both ;

5. The Rules of the Epic or Narrative Poem, of the Poetic Diction or Language, and of English numbers.

The frequent repetition of the word *rule* is enough to prove how intolerantly classical were Gildon's theories : according to him, « no Modern had any merit but what he owed to the rules and precedents of the Ancients » (1). Shakespeare, in his opinion, was great only when he observed the rules : « He had a genius, indeed, capable of coming up to the rules, but not sufficient to find them out himself, though it be plain from his own words he saw the absurdities of his own conduct... Sir Philip Sidney had discovered the faults of the English Stage in his *Apologie for Poetrie*, and Shakespeare himself had written one or two almost regular plays; therefore Shakespeare's errors are the more inexcusable ». To Gildon, Shakespeare was tolerable only in extracts ; and at the end of his *Complete Art* he published a selection of beauties from Shakespeare's plays in modernized English, entitled *Shakespeariana*. Gildon's book was, on the whole, a good code for beginners, or, according to the poet Matthew Green : « Poetic buckets for dry wells » (2).

(1) See a short paper on Gildon's theories in the *Modern Language Review* XIV, p. 386. (*Two minor Critics of the Age of Pope*, by D. S. Sarma).

(2) *The Spleen* (1737), line 16.

Gildon appears to us more classical than Boileau, whose *Art Poétique*, translated in 1680 by William Soame, had been modified by Dryden to suit English taste (1). Gildon was the extreme theorist of the tendencies that prevailed in English poetry from the Restoration to the end of the 18th century. His book is interesting to study in this light; it is very learned, sometimes even pedantic in tone, but often original, as for example in the last dialogue in which musical notations are used to explain the theory of stressed syllables in English metre.

Gildon evidently founded extravagant hopes on this book, of which he was very proud. The humble dedication which he addressed to King George the First was probably rewarded with some money. But the book did not obtain the success it deserved: the bookseller had for three years to advertise it continually as « just published », in order to get rid of the whole edition. Gildon was happily indemnified by the rapid sale of his pamphlet against *Robinson Crusoe*, published in the following year (2). But the success of one book in those days could afford only a very temporary relief. Merely to live, Gildon was obliged to beg from the rich patrons of literary men. He sent his works to any nobleman who was likely to give him a few guineas. He probably received a generous gift from the Earl of Carnarvon (3), who was well known for his liberality to poor writers: Gildon had written in his honour a poem of over 600 lines entitled *Canons, or the Vision* (4).

(1) See Charlanne: *L'Influence française en Angleterre au 17^e siècle*, I, p. 315.

(2) See the Introduction to Gildon's pamphlet.

(3) James Brydges, afterwards Duke of Chandos.

(4) *Canons* (near Edgware), was the name of the Earl's magnificent residence. It was described by De Foe in his *Tour through Great Britain*, (II, 3).

He was also amply rewarded by the Duchess of Buckinghamshire and Normanby : he had long before prepared a commentary on the Duke's *Essay on Poetry*, which His Grace himself had been pleased to read and correct, but did not think fit to publish. At the Duke's death on the 24 th of February 1721, the manuscript was returned to Gildon who added two similar commentaries on the *Essay on translated Verse* by the Earl of Roscommon, and Lord Landsdowne's (1) *On Unnatural Flights in Poetry*. The whole was published under the title *The Laws of English Poetry* : it was much discussed in literary circles, because of the names of the poets, but the commentaries are heavy, pedantic, and full of absurdities such as this : « Mr Addison in the *Spectators*, in his criticisms upon Milton, seems to have mistaken the matter, in endeavouring to bring that poem to the rules of the epopœia, which cannot be done... It is not an Heroic Poem, but a Divine one, and indeed of a new species. It is plain that the proposition of all the heroic poems of the Ancients mentions some one person as the subject of their poem... But Milton begins his poem of things, not of men ». Such discussions seem to us trifling and ridiculous : but at that time they allowed their author to pass as a critic of considerable mark. What pleased Gildon certainly more than the reputation of his book or its success — which was but indifferent (2) — was the important sum he received from the Duke's widow ; but, he tells us himself (3), « though my

(1) George Granville, baron Landsdowne (1667-1735) verse-writer and dramatic author.

(2) The bookseller advertised it again in 1723 (*British Journal* for March 26 th) which shows that the edition was not yet sold out.

(3) In his 2 nd letter to Prior (Aug. 1 st, 1721). *Hist. Mss. Comm. Mss. of the Marquis of Bath*, III, 507.

Lady Duchess's present was extremely handsome, yet my anticipations upon it were so large that I had but little left of it as soon as received ». Having paid his debts, Gildon, penniless once more, resolved to start a collection in his own favour : he thought that if he interested the Harleys, success would be certain. His old friend Dennis had often received money from the ex-minister through the intermediary of the poet Prior, who was a favourite of the Harleys. From his dark and filthy garret in Bull Head Court, at the corner of Jewin St. and Aldersgate St., Gildon now begins a long correspondence with Prior. His letters, which were never answered, are interesting as they show that notwithstanding his low and miserable condition, he was still full of intolerable vanity.

About the middle of February (1721) Gildon had sent to Prior's house in Duke St. the manuscript of a tragedy, which, from the description given, seems to have been simply the old manuscript of his tragedy, *the Patriot* : which was impudent enough, as Prior was expected to believe that it was original work. To the manuscript Gildon joined a letter begging Prior for his intercession with Harley. A week later, on the 21 st, Gildon, who was growing impatient at receiving no acknowledgment, sent the following missive in praise of his work (1) :

« It is now a week since I presumed to trouble you with a manuscript tragedy and a letter to beg your mediation and recommendation of it to my Lord Harley and his Lady, that is, provided it met with your own approval, which I flatter myself it would do, because it moves the passions in so eminent a degree, which is the chief excellence in that way of writing, and so allowed to be by all ages till the present, when we have had a sort of grammat-

(1) *Hist. Mss. Comm. Rep.* — *Mss. of the Marquis of Bath* III, 490.

ical critics arise, who have put the diction or language upon a foot with it, nay, who have made the diction, though scarce taken notice of by Aristotle, the chief mark and characteristic of a good or bad tragedy, and such a sort of diction, which, though correct enough in itself, is yet by its uniformity scarce tolerable in this way of writing, if we may give any credit to Horace, Boileau, and even to the nature of things; for tragedy consisting of the representation of different passions, must of necessity vary its style according to the nature of each passion which it brings on the stage. But this is a subject of too large an extent for a letter, and considering the knowledge and judgment of the person I write to, wholly superfluous. I must confess that there may be some bold metaphors of Mr Lee's which I have retained in this alteration, and which I choose rather to do than to deviate too far from the genius and spirit of my author, but I hope they are not many nor so great but that the excellence of the passions may sufficiently atone for them. It was by this quality alone that Otway fixed his immortal reputation with all but the verbal critics, and I think I may say that after Otway the tragedy under our consideration claims the next place in that particular; but I forgot myself. If this play wants an apology to such a judge as Mr Pryor, I am sure it deserves none. If it does not, it will sufficiently recommend itself. I therefore only once more beg, that, if you approve on't, you would recommend it to my Lord and Lady Harley's perusal and patronage. — P. S. - I would have waited on you myself, but that I have been confined to my chamber by blindness and lameness and a very infirm health. »

Many weeks passed. Prior thought Gildon troublesome and neither answered his letter, nor spoke to Harley. By the middle of July, having spent the money he had received from the Duchess of Buckinghamshire, Gildon ordered 3 of his books to be left at Harley's, one directed to

My Lord himself, one to My Lady, and the third to the distinguished poet, their friend. A fortnight passed, and there was still no answer ; so, on the 1st of August, Gildon sent a more pressing epistle, reminding Prior of his gift of books, and begging his « earnest and speedy assistance » to obtain Harley's help for the collection he was beginning. The chief argument he used in his appeal was that the poet had already used his influence with Harley for writers in similar circumstances : « These two last terms, my old acquaintance Sam. Briscoe (1) called upon me, and among other things informed me that he had in his trouble met with no act of generosity but from Mr Prior who had given him 5 guineas for a set of Tom Brown's (2) works, and had prevailed with my lord Harley to give him five more for another set. He farther informed me that one Mr Jacups (3), a new author, told him that Mr Prior had made a collection for him to pay his debts. These generous actions to these two makes me hope that I likewise shall find the good effect of your beneficent temper, having every way, I think, as reasonable a claim to it, as the two persons I have mentioned, and by this a stronger, that I am in years, blind and lame, and of a very infirm health. I am endeavouring to get a collection made for me to enable me to remove from this out-of-the-way place to one more proper for my condition, and to provide against the attacks of necessity

(1) A poor bookseller and writer, who had been reduced to bankruptcy. Gildon had compiled for him the translation of *Lucian's Works*.

(2) See the note on the last page of Chapter I.

(3) The name was misspelt by Gildon's amanuensis ; this is Giles Jacob (1686-1744) known chiefly for his *Poetical Register, or Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets* (1719-20). In 1721 he dedicated a poem, *Human Happiness*, to Prior.

by setting up a lecture (1) which will be sufficient to supply my wants. Being sensible that to engage my Lord Harley in this collection, there is nothing wanting but your mediation, that is what now I most earnestly beg at your hands... » (2).

Another week passed, and Gildon, in despair, gave vent to his angry feelings of wounded dignity in an epistle, the whole of which is worth quoting as being characteristic of his vanity and lack of self-respect (3) : « I understand that you and my Lord's family are all moving out of town next Saturday. I am the more surprised because I have not had one line from you about the present I sent you, or my subsequent letter to you, which is a treatment that I have not met with from any one but Mr Prior ; for though I have written to the greatest men in England, both ecclesiastical and temporal, yet not one of them ever thought me unworthy of a civil answer, but I suppose that it is not Mr Prior's way. As a gentleman, as I may say I am both by birth and education, and I think without much vanity I may say a scholar, I thought I had a right to an answer from another gentleman, but it seems I was mistaken, which confirms the opinion of a very intimate friend of mine, who told me that I had so long locked myself up from the world that I had forgot the world. And yet I hope that my mistaking Mr Prior will not be a very strong proof of this assertion, because upon my sending one of my books to one of the greatest persons in

(1) This was evidently a new form of Gildon's project (of which he had already spoken to Harley) for opposing the stage by moral lectures (see chap. III).

(2) *Hist. Mss. Comm. Rep.* — *Mss. of the Marquis of Bath*, III, 506-7.

(3) *Id.* p. 507. This letter has been published by Mr. Bickley in his *Life of Prior* (pp. 266-7).

England (1), he not only sent me 20 guineas, but likewise ordered his chaplain to send me a very obliging answer. I have much more to say to you upon this head, but shall defer till you return to town. I shall trouble you with no more at present. »

But Prior was spared Gildon's recriminations, for he never came back to London; he died at Wimpole, Harley's country-seat, in September 1721.

Gildon's last years were lamentable ; they were as uneventful and sad as his youth had been agitated and gay. His blindness overwhelmed him, and it needed tremendous energy to carry on the drudgery of a hack-writer. He never thought of getting rid of his woes through suicide, as he had announced he would do, in the early days of his deistical career. Lloyd, his amanuensis, read to him daily from the papers or new-books, and wrote letters or original work at his dictation (2). His garret seemed darker than ever, as the visits of his friends grew rarer. Soon, he was too lame to go out, and perpetually in a state of ill-health. Nevertheless he had still to work day and night at small tasks for the booksellers. On the 12 th of January 1724 (3), Death struck this literary beggar in the 58 th year of his age ; it must have been welcomed as a deliverer.

In the *Political State of Great Britain*, Boyer (4) men-

(1) This was most probably the Earl of Carnarvon, who, when this was written, had been created Duke of Chandos and appointed Governor of the Charterhouse.

(2) Letter to Dennis, dated Jan. 20 th, 1722. (Published in Dennis's *Remarks upon several Passages*).

(3) And not on the 14 th, as Nichols erroneously states (*Literary Anecdotes*, 1, 25 n). See Musgrave's *Obituary*, Jacob's *Poets*, 1, 115, etc.

(4) (1667-1720), a French Huguenot who had taken refuge

tioned Gildon's death and described him as a man « of great literature but mean genius ». The *Universal Journal* for Jan. 15 th published a poem *To the Memory of Mr Charles Gildon*, which, for all its coarse wit, sums up fairly the career of the unhappy writer :

*« I lov'd thee living, and I mourn thee dead,
 Whose Fate 'twas to be better Taught than Fed.
 Whate'er the Greek and Latin had in store
 Of Art and Eloquence thou hadst and more...
 From Mass to Common Prayer he early flew,
 The Papists Terror, and the Deists too.
 Who, whilst he lashed the Vices among Men,
 Religion never suffer'd from his Pen...
 To sum up all, we've lost an honest fellow,
 That treated more in metal red than yellow.*

Such was the epitaph of a man whose life would constitute one of the most pitiful chapters of a *Vie de Bohême* in England at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century.

in England. An annualist and journalist, he is known chiefly for his polemics with De Foe.