



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

Remarks On The Life and Writings Of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin

Orrery, John Boyle of

London, 1752

A general character of Dr. Swift.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-49109](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-49109)

REMARKS ON THE LIFE

with dignity and advantage to your country, and with a rising reputation to yourself.

For my own part, early disappointments, the perplexed state of my affairs, indifferent health, and many other untoward incidents, all contributed to make me, even in my earliest part of life, too fond of retirement. Years have encreased the inclination, and time rather confirms, than corrects the error; however, I have not suffered my mind to be totally inactive: but by holding as little connection as possible with the living, I have employed myself in conversing, and forming an acquaintance with the dead: and have from thence received more real satisfaction and improvement, than probably might have attended me, had I been directed in the pursuit of fame, fortune, or ambition.

I am much pleased that you approve of my observations on PLINY's letters. I engaged in that work, with a design of pointing out, to your brother Lord BOYLE, the amiable qualities of that elegant Roman. But I cannot rest satisfied unless I offer to you also, some public token of my paternal affection: and therefore, I have lately been examining the works of Dr. SWIFT, with an intention of gathering materials for my future correspondence with you: and here, my dear HAMILTON, I dedicate to you, those criticisms which have occurred to me; and shall mix with them such particulars of his life and character, as I flatter myself, may tend at least to your entertainment, if not to your improvement.

Let me begin by giving you a short but general view of SWIFT's character.

He

AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 3.

He was in the decline of life when I knew him. His friendship was an honour to me, and to say the truth, I have even drawn advantage from his errors. I have beheld him in all humours and dispositions, and I have formed various speculations from the several weaknesses, to which I observed him liable. His capacity and strength of mind were undoubtedly equal to any task whatever. His pride, his spirit, or his ambition, call it by what name you please, was boundless: but, his views were checked in his younger years, and the anxiety of that disappointment had a visible effect upon all his actions. He was sour and severe, but not absolutely ill-natured. He was sociable only to particular friends, and to them only at particular hours. He knew politeness more than he practised it. He was a mixture of avarice, and generosity: the former, was frequently prevalent, the latter, seldom appeared, unless excited by compassion. He was open to adulation, and could not, or would not distinguish between low flattery, and just applause. His abilities rendered him superiour to envy. He was undisguised and perfectly sincere. I am induced to think, that he entered into orders, more from some private and fixed resolution, than from absolute choice: be that as it may, he performed the duties of the church with great punctuality, and a decent degree of devotion. He read prayers rather in a strong nervous voice, than in a graceful manner: and altho' he has been often accused of irreligion, nothing of that kind appeared in his conversation or behaviour. His cast of mind induced him to think, and speak more of politics than of religion.

4 REMARKS ON THE LIFE

His perpetual views were directed towards power: and his chief aim was to be removed into *England*: but when he found himself entirely disappointed, he turned his thoughts to opposition, and became the patron of *Ireland*, in which country he was born. Here it may not be improper to observe to you, that many of his friends imagined him a native of *England*, and many others, I know not whether to call them friends or enemies, were willing to suppose him the natural son of Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE. Neither of these facts are true. He was born in *Dublin*, *November* the thirtieth, in the year sixteen hundred and sixty seven, and was carried into *England* soon after his birth, by his nurse, who being obliged to cross the sea, and having a nurse's fondness for the child at her breast, conveyed him on ship-board, without the knowledge of his mother or relations, and kept him with her at *Whitehaven* in *Cumberland*, during her residence three years at that place. This extraordinary event made his return seem as if he had been transplanted to *Ireland*, rather than that he had owed his original existence to that soil. But perhaps, he tacitly hoped to inspire different nations with a contention for his birth: at least in his angry moods, when he was peevish, and provoked at the ingratitude of *Ireland*, he was frequently heard to say, "I am not of this vile country, I am an Englishman." Such an assertion, although meant figuratively, was often received literally: and the report was still farther assisted by Mr. POPE, who in one of his letters has this expression, "Tho' one or two of our friends are gone, since you saw your native country, there