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

Orrery, John Boyle of

London, 1752

The place of his birth.

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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

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“there remain a few.”” But Dr. SWIFT, in his cooler hours, never denied his country: on the contrary, he frequently mentioned, and pointed out the house where he was born. The other suggestion concerning the illegitimacy of his birth, is equally false. Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE was employed as a minister abroad from the year sixteen hundred and sixty five, to the year sixteen hundred and seventy: first at *Brussels*, and afterwards at the *Hague*, as you will find by his correspondence with the Earl of *Arlington*, and other ministers of state: so that Dr. SWIFT's mother, who never crossed the sea, except from *England* to *Ireland*, was out of all possibility of a personal correspondence with Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE, till some years after her son's birth.

I have already mentioned to you the exact place, and date of Doctor SWIFT's nativity, but the rules of biography make it necessary to give you some account of his family. It shall be as short as possible, since, although his ancestors were persons of very decent, and reputable characters, he himself has been the herald to blazon the dignity of their coat. His grandfather was the Reverend Mr. THOMAS SWIFT, Vicar of *Goodridge* near *Ross* in *Herefordshire*. He enjoyed a paternal estate in that county, which is still in possession of his great grandson DEANE SWIFT, Esq; He died in the year sixteen hundred and fifty eight, leaving six sons, GODWIN, THOMAS, DRYDEN, WILLIAM, JONATHAN and ADAM.

Letter LXXX. Mr. POPE to Dr. SWIFT, *March* 23, 1736-7.