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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

His degree of batchelor of arts, speciali gratiâ.

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AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 7

unacceptable to his companions ; so that he was little regarded, and less beloved. Nor were the academical exercises agreeable to his genius. He held logic and metaphysics in the utmost contempt, and he scarce considered mathematics and natural philosophy, unless to turn them into ridicule. The studies which he followed were history and poetry. In these he made a great progress ; but to all other branches of science he had given so very little application, that when he appeared as a candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, he was set aside on account of insufficiency.

You will be surpris'd at such an incident in his life : but the fact was undoubtedly true : and even at last he obtained his admission *speciali gratiâ* : a phrase which in that University carries with it the utmost marks of reproach. It is a kind of dishonourable degree, and the record of it, notwithstanding Dr. SWIFT's present established character throughout the learned world, must for ever remain against him in the academical register at *Dublin*.

Ambition, you will agree with me, could scarce have met with a severer blow. HERCULES found himself set aside for want of strength ; or, if admitted among the wrestlers, admitted only by favour and indulgence ; yet still he must be conscious, that he was HERCULES. Disappointments, the earlier they happen in life, the deeper impression they make upon the heart. SWIFT was full of indignation at the treatment which he had received in *Ireland*, and therefore resolv'd to pursue his studies at *Oxford*. However, that he might

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be admitted *ad eundem*, he was obliged to carry with him the *Testimonium* of his Degree.

The expression *speciali gratiâ* is so peculiar to the University of *Dublin*, that when Mr. SWIFT exhibited his Testimonial at *Oxford*, the members of the *English* University concluded, that the words *speciali gratiâ* must signify a degree conferred in reward of extraordinary diligence, or learning. You may imagine, he did not try to undeceive them. He was immediately admitted *ad eundem*, and chose to enter himself of *Hart Hall*, now *Hartford College*, where he constantly resided (some visits to his mother at *Leicester*, and to Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE at *Moore Park* excepted) till he took his degree as Master of Arts, which, if I remember rightly, was in the year ninety one.

Having attended my friend SWIFT thus far in his road of life, let me rest a little before I proceed farther with him in the journey, and let me desire you to keep this letter, as I intend that it shall be followed hereafter by others of the same sort, and relating to the same person.

I am, my dearest HAMILTON,

your affectionate Father,

O R R E R Y,

L E T.