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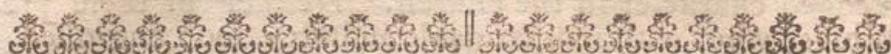
Remarks On The Life and Writings Of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin

Orrery, John Boyle of

London, 1752

Letter IV.

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L E T T E R I V.

UPON the death of King WILLIAM, and the accession of Queen ANNE Dr. SWIFT came into *England*. It cannot be denied, that the chief ministers of that Queen, whether distinguished under the titles of Whigs or Tories, of High Church or of Low Church, were, from the beginning to the end of her reign, encouragers of learning, and patrons of learned men. The wits and poets of that æra, were numerous and eminent. Amidst the croud, yet shining above the rest, appeared Dr. SWIFT.

*Ipse ante alios pulcherrimus omnes,
Infert se socium Æneas, atque agmina jungit.*

It will be impossible, in mentioning the reign of this Princess, or in writing memoirs of Dr. SWIFT, to avoid the frequent use of those cant words Whig and Tory, “two creatures, says a modern author, ^a who “are born with a secret antipathy to each other, and engage as naturally when they meet, as the elephant and “rhinoceros.” In a mixture of these two jarring ani-

^a See the Spectator, No. 50.

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mals consisted the first ministry of Queen ANN, but the greater share of the administration was committed to the Whigs, who, with indefatigable industry, soon engrossed the whole; enclosing their Sovereign within their own fortifications, and keeping her captive within their own walls. The Queen, whose heart was naturally inclined towards the Tories, remained an unwilling prisoner several years to the Whigs, till Mr. HARLEY, with a tory army, undermined all the whiggish fortresses, levelled their works to the ground, seized the Princess, and during the remainder of her life, surrounded, and defended her with a new set of troops under the command of the Duke of ORMOND.

Dr. SWIFT was known to the great men of each denomination: and although he soon attached himself openly to the Tories, it is certain he had been bred up, and educated with Whigs; at least with such, who, in the Lexicon of Party, may be found ranged under that title. His motives for quitting the lower vallies of Whiggism for the higher regions of Torism, appear throughout his works. The persons who had now signalized themselves as Whigs, had renounced those principles by which the old Whigs were denoted, and had embraced several of those tenets of which their forefathers had either a real, or a pretended, abhorrence. The effects of power and ambition are extraordinary and boundless. They blind our faculties, they stagger our resolution, and they subvert our nature. Not all the metamorphoses of OVID can produce a parallel equal to the change that appears in the
same

fame man, when from a Patriot he becomes a Courtier: yet it may be asserted, and will redound to the honour of Dr. SWIFT, that when he rose into the confidence and esteem of those great men, who sat at the helm of affairs during the last years of Queen ANN's reign, he scarce ever lost himself, or grew giddy by the plenitude of power, and the exalted station of frequently appearing in the confidence, and favour of the reigning minister. He may have been carried away by inconsiderate passion, but he was not to be swayed by deliberate evil. He may have erred in judgement, but he was upright in intention. The welfare and prosperity of these kingdoms were the constant aim of his politics, and the immediate subject of his thoughts and writings. But, as HAMLET says, "Something too much of this." Let us continue therefore to trace the footsteps of his life; in which, scarce any circumstance can be found material from the year seventeen hundred and two, till the change of the ministry in the year seventeen hundred and ten. During this interval, he had worked hard within those subterraneous passages, where, as has been hinted before, the mine was formed that blew up the whiggish ramparts, and opened a way for the Tories to the Queen. SWIFT was to the Tories, what CÆSAR was to the Romans, at once a leader of their armies, and an historiographer of their triumphs. He resided very much in *England*: his inclinations were always there. His intimacy with Lord OXFORD commenced, as far as may be deduced from his works, in

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October 1709. In a poem written in the year 1713, he says,

*'Tis (let me see) three years and more
(October next it will be four)
Since HARLEY bid me first attend,
And chose me for an humble friend.*

And again in another poem written in the same year,

*My Lord would carry on the jest,
And down to Windsor take his guest.
SWIFT much admires the place and air,
And longs to be a Canon there.
A Canon! that's a place too mean,
No, Doctor, you shall be a Dean.*

By this last quotation, and by numberless other instances in his works, it seems undeniable that a settlement in *England* was the unvaried object of Dr. SWIFT's ambition: so that his promotion to a deanery in *Ireland*, was rather a disappointment than a reward. In a letter to Mr. GAY, he says, "*The best, and greatest part of my life, until these last eight years, I spent in England. There I made my friendships, and there I left my desires. I am condemned for ever to another country:*"^a and in answer to a letter from Mr. POPE, who had offered incense to him, as to a tutelary saint in a state of

^a Letter 5. Vol. 7.

separation,

separation, he writes thus. “*You are an ill catholic,*
 “*or a worse geographer, for I can assure you, Ireland is*
 “*not paradise, and I appeal even to a Spanish divine,*
 “*whether addresses were ever made to a friend in hell or*
 “*purgatory?*”^a I shall cite no other quotations; but
 you will find in his letters, many expressions to the same
 purport.

Among the various branches, into which SWIFT’S
 expansive genius spread itself, those peculiar talents of
 levelling his writings to the lowest, and sustaining their
 dignity, to the highest capacity, were probably the ori-
 ginal motives that attracted the Earl of OXFORD’S friend-
 ship to him. In the year 1709, the character of Dr.
 SWIFT, as an author, was perfectly established: he
 had shewn abilities equal to those attributed by HO-
 MER to ULYSSES: he could appear a beggar among
 beggars, and a king among kings.

From the year 1710, to the latest period of Queen
 ANN, we find him fighting on the side of the ministers,
 and maintaining their cause in pamphlets, poems, and
 weekly papers. In one of his letters to Mr. POPE, he
 has this expression, “*I have conversed in some freedom*
 “*with more ministers of state, of all parties, than usually*
 “*happens to men of my level; and I confess, in their capacity*
 “*as ministers, I look upon them as a race of people whose*
 “*acquaintance no man would court otherwise than on the*
 “*score of vanity, or ambition.*”^b Lord OXFORD, as
 a gentleman, and a scholar, might be open and un-
 reserved to Dr. SWIFT, as far as his Lordship’s

^a Letter 4. Vol. 7.

^b Letter 4. Vol. 7.

nature would permit; but as a minister of state he ever appeared mysterious and ænigmatical, delivering his oracles, like the Delphian Deity, in occult terms and ambiguous expressions.

A man always appears of more consequence to himself, than he is in reality to any other person. Such perhaps was the case of Dr. SWIFT. He found himself much indulged by the smiles, and conversation of the Earl of OXFORD. He knew how useful he was to the administration in general: and in one of his letters (I think the same which I have last quoted) he mentions, that the place of historiographer was intended for him; but I am apt to suspect that he flattered himself too highly: at least it is very evident, that he remained without any preferment till the year 1713, when he was made Dean of St. *Patrick's*. In point of power and revenue, such a deanery might be esteemed no inconsiderable promotion; but to an ambitious mind, whose perpetual aim was a settlement in *England*, a dignity in any other kingdom must appear (as perhaps it was designed) only an honourable, and profitable banishment.

But, my HAMILTON, I will never hide the freedom of my sentiments from you. I am much inclined to believe that the temper of my friend SWIFT, might occasion his *English* friends, to wish him happily and properly promoted, at a distance. His spirit, for I would give it the softest name, was ever untractable. The motions of his genius were often irregular. He assumed more the air of a patron, than of a friend. He affected rather to dictate than advise. He was elated
with

with the appearance of enjoying ministerial confidence. He enjoyed the shadow: the substance was detained from him. He was employed, not trusted; and at the same time that he imagined himself a subtil diver, who dextrously shot down into the profoundest regions of politics, he was suffered only to sound the shallows nearest the shore, and was scarce admitted to descend below the froth at the top. Perhaps the deeper bottoms were too muddy for his inspection.

By reflexions of this sort, we may account for his disappointment in an *English* bishoprick. A disappointment which, he imagined, he owed to a joint application made against him to the Queen by Dr. SHARPE, Archbishop of *York*, and by a Lady of the highest rank and character. Archbishop SHARPE, according to Dr. SWIFT's account, had represented him to the Queen, as a person who was not a Christian; the great Lady had supported the aspersion; and the Queen, upon such assurances, had given away the bishoprick, contrary to her Majesty's first intentions. SWIFT kept himself indeed within some tolerable bounds, when he spoke of the Queen: but his indignation knew no limits, when he mentioned the Archbishop, or the Lady.

Business and ceremony, (two commanders, that I hope you will list under, much more willingly than I can) call me away from my letter, although nothing can ever call away my thoughts from you, or interrupt the tenderness with which I am, dear HAMILTON,

Your affectionate Father,

O R R E R Y.

L E T.