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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

A quotation from one of his letters to Mr. Pope.

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

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
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