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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 state of Ireland at the death of Queen Anne.

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LETTER VI.

WE are now, dear HAMILTON, no longer to behold Dr. SWIFT of any importance in *England*: his hopes there are crushed for ever: his ministerial friends are degraded, banished, or imprisoned. Indecent rage, sanguinary zeal, and ill-temper'd loyalty revelled at large throughout the three kingdoms, especially in *Ireland*, where duels were fought almost every week, and where the pest was so universal, that the ladies were as violent as the gentlemen. Even children at school quarrelled for Kings, instead of fighting for apples.

As SWIFT was known to have been attached to the Queen's last ministry, to have written against the Whigs, and "to have oiled many a spring which HARLEY moved," he met with frequent indignities from the populace, and indeed was equally abused by persons of all ranks and denominations. Such a treatment soured his temper, confined his acquaintance, and added bitterness to his style: and, since the future part of his life and writings is to differ, in all circumstances, so widely from the past, since his studies and companions, his politics and his customs, are now to be altered and exchanged for new habits, new friends, new ambition,

and a new world, suffer me, my HAM, to take a general review of him as an author.

If we consider his prose works, we shall find a certain masterly conciseness in their style, that has never been equalled by any other writer. The truth of this assertion will more evidently appear, by comparing him with some of the authors of his own time. Of these Dr. TILLOTSON, and Mr. ADDISON, are to be numbered among the most eminent. ADDISON has all the powers that can captivate and improve: his diction is easy, his periods are well turned, his expressions are flowing, and his humour is delicate. TILLOTSON is nervous, grave, majestic, and perspicuous. We must join both these characters together to form a true idea of Dr. SWIFT: yet as he outdoes ADDISON in humour, he excels TILLOTSON in perspicuity. The Archbishop indeed confined himself to subjects relative to his profession: but ADDISON and SWIFT are more diffusive writers. They continually vary in their manner, and treat different topics in a different style. When the writings of ADDISON terminate in party, he loses himself extremely, and from a delicate, and just comedian, deviates into one of the lowest kind^a. Not so Dr. SWIFT; he appears like a masterly gladiator. He wields the sword of party with ease, justness and dexterity: and while he entertains the ignorant and the vulgar, he draws an equal attention from the learned and the great. When he is serious, his gravity becomes him. When he laughs, his readers must laugh

^a See the papers intitled the Freeholder.

with