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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

An anecdote concerning Daphne.

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AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 81

noble patron LORD BOLINGBROKE. In that instance he has been as silent, as VIRGIL has been to HORACE, and yet he certainly had not a grain of envy in his composition.

I think I can discern a third kind of style in his poems addressed to MR. POPE, MR. GAY, DR. DELANY, and DR. YOUNG. When he writes to them, there is a mixture of ease, dignity, familiarity, and affection. They were his intimate friends, whom he loved sincerely, and whom he wished to accompany into the poetical regions of eternity.

I have just now cast my eye over a poem called *Death and Daphne*, which makes me recollect an odd incident relating to that nymph. SWIFT, soon after our acquaintance, introduced me to her, as to one of his female favourites. I had scarce been half an hour in her company, before she asked me, if I had seen the DEAN'S poem upon *Death and Daphne*. As I told her I had not, she immediately unlocked a cabinet, and bringing out the manuscript, read it to me with a seeming satisfaction, of which, at that time, I doubted the sincerity. While she was reading, the Dean was perpetually correcting her for bad pronunciation, and for placing a wrong emphasis upon particular words. As soon as she had gone thorough the composition, she assured me smilingly, that the portrait of DAPHNE was drawn for herself: I begged to be excused from believing it, and protested that I could not see one feature that had the least resemblance, but the Dean immediately burst into a fit of laughter. "You fancy, says he, that you are very polite, but you are

G

" much

“ much mistaken. That Lady had rather be a DAPHNE
 “ drawn by me, than a SACHARISSA by any other pen-
 “ cil.” She confirmed what he had said, with great
 earnestness, so that I had no other method of retrieving
 my error, than by whispering in her ear, as I was con-
 ducting her down stairs to dinner, that indeed I found

“ *Her hand as dry and cold as lead.*”

You see the command which SWIFT had over all his
 females; and you would have smiled to have found his
 house, a constant seraglio of very virtuous women, who
 attended him from morning till night, with an obedi-
 ence, an awe, and an assiduity, that are seldom paid to
 the richest, or the most powerful lovers; no, not even
 to the Grand Signor himself.

To these Ladies, SWIFT owed the publication of
 many pieces, which ought never to have been delivered
 to the press. He communicated every composition as
 soon as finished, to his female senate, who, not only
 passed their judgement on the performance, but con-
 stantly asked, and almost as constantly obtained, a copy
 of it. You cannot be surprized that it was immediately
 afterwards seen in print: and when printed, became
 a part of his works. He lived much at home, and
 was continually writing, when alone. Not any of his
 Senators presumed to approach him when he signified
 his pleasure to remain in private, and without interrup-
 tion. His nightgown and slippers were not easier put
 on or off, than his attendants. No Prince ever met
 with more flattery to his own person, or more devotion