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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

Swift's seraglio.

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

“ 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

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to his own mandates. This despotic power not only blinded him, but gave a loose to passions that ought to have been kept under a proper restraint. I am sorry to say, that whole nations are sometimes sacrificed to his resentment. Reflections of that sort appear to me the least justifiable of any kind of satyr. You will read his *Acerrima* with indignation; and his *Minutiæ* with regret. Yet I must add, that since he has descended so low as to write, and, still so much lower, as to print riddles, he is excellent even in that kind of versification. The lines are smoother, the expressions are neater, and the thought is closer pursued than in any other *riddle-writer* whatever. But, SWIFT composing riddles, is TITIAN painting draught-boards, which must have been inexcusable, while there remained a sign-post painter in the world.

At the latter end of the volume, you will find two Latin poems. The first, *An Epistle to Dr. SHERIDAN*; the last, *A description of the rocks at Carbery in Ireland*. The Dean was extremely solicitous, that they should be printed among his works: and what is no less true than amazing, he assumed to himself more vanity upon these two Latin poems, than upon many of his best English performances. It is said, that MILTON in his own judgement preferred the *Paradise regained* to the *Paradise lost*. There possibly might be found some excuse for such a preference, but in SWIFT's case there can be none. He understood the Latin language perfectly well, and he read it constantly, but he was no Latin poet. And if the *Carberiaæ rupes*, and the *Epistola ad THOMAM*