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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**

Some general observations upon Lemuel Gulliver's Travels into several  
remote Nations of the World.

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84 REMARKS ON THE LIFE

SHERIDAN, had been the produce of any other author, they must have undergone a severe censure from Dr. SWIFT.

Here I shall dismiss this volume of his poems, which has drawn me into a greater length of letter than I intended. Adieu, my HAM, believe me ever,

*Your affectionate Father,*

O R R E R Y.



LETTER XI.

*My dear HAMILTON,*

THE third volume of SWIFT'S works contains *The travels of LEMUEL GULLIVER into several remote nations of the world.* They are divided into four parts; the first, a voyage to *Lilliput*; the second, a voyage to *Brobdingnag*; the third, to *Laputa* and other islands; the fourth, and most extraordinary, to the country of the *Houyhnhnms*. These voyages are intended as a moral political romance, in which SWIFT seems to have exerted the strongest efforts of a fine irregular genius. But while his imagination and his wit delight, the venomous strokes of his satyr, although in some places

REMARKS ON THE LIFE  
AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 85

places just, are carried into so universal a severity, that not only all human actions, but human nature itself, is placed in the worst light. Perfection in every attribute is not indeed allotted to particular men: but, among the whole species, we discover such an assemblage of all the great, and amiable virtues, as may convince us, that the original order of nature contains in it the greatest beauty. It is directed in a right line, but it deviates into curves and irregular motions, by various attractions, and disturbing causes. Different qualifications shine out in different men. BACON and NEWTON (not to mention BOYLE) shew the divine extent of the human mind: of which power SWIFT could not be insensible; but as I have often told you, his disappointments rendered him splenetic, and angry with the whole world,

Education, habit, and constitution, give a surprising variety of characters; and, while they produce some particular qualities, are apt to check others. Fortitude of mind seldom attends a sedentary life: nor is the man, whose ambitious views are crossed, scarce ever afterwards indued with benevolence of heart. The same mind, that is capable of exerting the greatest virtue, by some defect in the first steps of education, often degenerates into the greatest vice. These effects take their source from causes almost mechanical. The soul, in our present situation, is blended and enclosed with corporeal substance, and the matter of which our body

## 86 REMARKS ON THE LIFE

is composed, produces strange impulses upon the mind: but the instances that might illustrate, and explain the different effects arising from this formation, are too digressively extensive for my present plan.

To correct vice, by shewing her deformity in opposition to the beauty of virtue, and to amend the false systems of philosophy, by pointing out the errors, and applying salutary means to avoid them, is a noble design. This was the general intent, I would fain flatter myself, of my hieroglyphic friend.

GULLIVER'S travels are chiefly to be looked upon as an irregular essay of SWIFT'S peculiar wit and humour. Let us take a view of the two first parts together. The inhabitants of *Lilliput* are represented, as if reflected from a convex mirrour, by which every object is reduced to a despicable minuteness. The inhabitants of *Brobdingnag*, by a contrary mirrour, are enlarged to a shocking deformity. In *Lilliput* we behold a set of puny insects, or animalcules in human shape, ridiculously engaged in affairs of importance. In *Brobdingnag* the monsters of enormous size are employed in trifles.

LEMUEL GULLIVER has observed great exactness in the just proportion, and appearances of the several objects thus lessened and magnified: but he dwells too much upon these optical deceptions. The mind is tired with a repetition of them, especially as he points out no beauty, nor use in such amazing discoveries, which  
might

AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 87

might have been so continued as to have afforded improvement, at the same time that they gave astonishment. Upon the whole, he too often shews an indelicacy that is not agreeable, and exerts his vein of humour most improperly in some places, where (I am afraid) he glances at religion.

In his description of *Lilliput*, he seems to have had *England* more immediately in view. In his description of *Blefuscu* he seems to intend the people and kingdom of *France*: yet the allegory between these nations is frequently interrupted, and scarce any where compleat. Several just strokes of satyr are scattered here and there upon errors in the conduct of our government: and, in the sixth chapter of his voyage to *Brobdingnag*, he gives an account of the political state of *Europe*: his observations are delivered with his usual spirit of humour and severity. He appears most particularly affected with the proceedings of the courts of judicature, and complains of being almost ruined by a Chancery suit, which was *determined in his favour with costs*. It must be confessed, that instances of this kind are too frequent in our courts of justice, and they leave us no room to boast of the execution of our present laws, however excellent the laws, in their own original foundation, may have been. *Judgement, when turned into worm-wood, is bitter*, but delays, as Lord BACON observes, turn it into vinegar: it becomes sharp, and corroding: and certainly it is more eligible to die immediately by the wound

wound of an enemy, than to decay lingering by poison, administered from a seeming friend.

The seventh chapter of the voyage of *Broddingnag* contains such sarcasms on the structure of the human body, as too plainly shew us, that the author was unwilling to lose any opportunity of debasing and ridiculing his own species.

Here a reflection naturally occurs, which, without any superstition, leads me tacitly to admire, and confess the ways of Providence: for this great genius, this mighty wit, who seemed to scoff, and scorn at all mankind, lived not only to be an example to punish his own pride, and to terrify ours, but underwent some of the greatest miseries to which human nature is liable. The particulars of this assertion will appear, by copying a letter which one of his relations sent to me, in answer to my enquiries after his situation.

My