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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 dictionary for his female senate.

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losophy, so that we shall never arrive at that perfection, however certain we may suppose ourselves of having attained to it already. Upon the whole, we may say with TULLY, *Omni bus ferè in rebus, et maximè in physicis quid non sit citius, quam quid sit, dixerim.*

The project for a more easy and expeditious method of writing a treatise in any science, by a wooden engine ^a, is entertainingly satyrical, and is aimed at those authors, who, instead of receiving materials from their own thoughts and observations, collect from dictionaries and common place-books, an irregular variety, without order, use, or design,

*Ut nec pes nec caput uni
Reddatur formæ.*

The project of shortning a discourse, by cutting polysyllables into one, and leaving out verbs and participles ^b, is pointed at the pernicious custom of contracting the English language, the dialect of which is naturally harsh, and that harshness is still encreased by improper contractions. As SWIFT was scrupulously exact in the pronunciation of his own tongue, not the least improper expression ever escaped his censure: and I remember to have seen in manuscript a dictionary of hard words, composed by him for the use of his female senate.

^a Page 218.

^b Page 220.

AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 99

The sixth chapter ^a is full of severity and fatyr. Sometimes it is exerted against the legislative power : sometimes against particular politicians : sometimes against women : and sometimes it degenerates into filth. True humour ought to be kept up with decency, and dignity, or it loses every tincture of entertainment. Descriptions that shock our delicacy cannot have the least good effect upon our minds. They offend us, and we fly precipitately from the sight. We cannot stay long enough to examine, whether wit, sense, or morality, may be couched under such odious appearances. I am sorry to say, that these sort of descriptions, which are too often interspersed throughout all SWIFT's works, are seldom written with any other view, or from any other motive, than a wild unbridled indulgence of his own humour and disposition.

He seems to have finished his voyage to LAPUTA in a careless hurrying manner, which makes me almost think, that sometimes he was tired with his work, and attempted to run through it as fast as he could ; otherwise why was the curtain dropped so soon ? or why were we deprived of so noble a scene as might have been discovered in the island of *Glubdubdrib* ^b, where the governor, by his skill in necromancy, had the power of calling whom he pleased from the dead ? I have not time by this post to write to you my thoughts upon a subject, which I confess awakened, but by no means satisfied my curiosity. I lamented to find so many il-

^a Page 223.

^b Chap. 7. Page 252.