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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 ghosts of Pompey and Cæser introduced by Swift only to grace the entry of Brutus, his favourite patriot.

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infer that the Romans were invincible, unless from some supernatural cause. SWIFT (no friend to military men) thinks the *Carthaginian* general unworthy of any farther notice: and hastens to call up the senate of *Rome*. This gives him an opportunity of being very severe upon a certain modern assembly, which he treats in a manner more resembling the Cynic in his cell, than the free humoured *Rabelais* in his easy chair.

POMPEY and CÆSAR only appear to grace the entry of BRUTUS, who is SWIFT's favourite patriot: but as CÆSAR generously confessed to GULLIVER, "That the greatest actions of his life, were not, by many degrees, equal to the glory of taking it away," it would have been a proper alleviation of the dictator's crimes, to have acknowledged him the greatest statesmen, orator, and soldier of the age, in which he lived: an age, fertile of eminent men: an age, when ambition was scarce looked upon as a crime: and when the Roman virtue (once the support and preservation of the commonwealth) was long since lost in vice and luxury: at such a time a single master was become necessary, and POMPEY would have seized the reins of government had not CÆSAR interposed. If the conspirators had restored liberty to their country, their act had been completely glorious, and would have shewed, that CÆSAR, not *Rome*, was degenerated. But if we may judge from the consequences, Heaven disapproved of the deed: a particular fate attended the conspirators, not one of whom died a natural death: and even BRUTUS, perhaps recollecting in his last moments the benefits, which he had received

ceived from CÆSAR, was staggered in his thoughts of virtue, and imagining himself deceived by a shadow, broke out into a pathetic expression, signifying, "that he had worshipped virtue as a substance, and had found it only a shadow:" so that he seems to have wanted that fortitude of mind, which constantly attends true virtue to the grave. This defect in the character of BRUTUS, is not improperly expressed in the famous gallery of the great duke of Tuscany, where there is a very fine head of BRUTUS begun by MICHAEL ANGELO, but left unfinished: under it is engraven upon a copper plate, this distic,

*Dum BRUTI effigiem sculptor de marmore ducit,
In mentem sceleris venit, et abstinuit.*

If BRUTUS erred, it was from a wrong notion of virtue. The character of CÆSAR is perhaps more amiable, but less perfect: his faults were great; however, many of them were foils to his virtues. A modern eminent writer, has represented him as a glutton: he tells us, that when CÆSAR went to the public feasts, he constantly took a vomit in the morning, with a design to indulge himself with more keeness, and to increase his appetite for the ensuing feast. The fact is true, but I would willingly believe the inference unjust. It is more than probable, that he practised this custom by the advice of his physicians, who might direct such a regimen, as the most certain, and immediate preservation against epileptic fits, to which the Dictator was often liable.