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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

A defence of Cæsar the dictator.

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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.

liable. Your grandfather, my honoured father, (who was excelled by few physicians in the theory of physic) has often told me, that those kind of convulsions were of such a nature as generally to come on after eating, and more violently if the stomach was overloaded. CÆSAR was so careful in observing a decent dignity in his behaviour, that he dreaded the shame of exposing publicly this weakness in his constitution, and therefore guarded against it in a prudent manner, which has since been construed into a reproach. This surmise, my HAM, rests upon the stronger foundation, as all authors agree, that he was most strictly, and remarkably abstemious.

In his public character, CÆSAR appears a strong example, how far the greatest natural, and acquired accomplishments may lose their lustre, when made subservient to false glory, and an immoderate thirst of power; as on the other hand, the history of BRUTUS may instruct us, what unhappy effects the rigid exercise of superiour virtue, when misapplied and carried too far, may produce in the most stedfast mind, or the soundest judgement.

GULLIVER has given to BRUTUS five companions, JUN. BRUTUS, SOCRATES, EPAMINONDAS, CATO the censor, and Sir THOMAS MOORE. Such a sextumvirate is not easily to be encreased: yet, let me hope, that the reflexion is too severely critical, when he adds, "*that all the ages of the world cannot furnish out a seventh.*" Every age has produced men of virtue, and abilities in
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