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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 and advice.

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

## L E T T E R XIX.

THE seventh volume contains SWIFT's epistolary correspondence, from the year 1714 to the year 1737, and, as it is an acknowledged observation, that no part of an author's writings give a greater insight into his natural disposition than his letters, (especially when written with freedom and sincerity) I shall endeavour to point out to you, such circumstances in SWIFT's epistles, and in the answers of his friends, as may afford you materials to form your own conjectures upon the different characters not only of *the Dean*, but of his correspondents. From preceding letters, you are probably become acquainted with Dr. SWIFT, but the manners and opinions of those persons with whom he corresponded, are in every respect so blended with his own, as not to be easily separated, and in such a kind of united view, they will mutually reflect light upon each other.

To a young man just entering into the world as you are, the subject may prove of particular importance, as it may guide him not only in the choice of his correspondents, but in his manner of writing to them.

The freedom of the press is to be watched and defended with the most jealous eye. It is one of the chief articles of that great *Charter* of liberty to which  
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the people of *England* are entitled : but as no human institution can be perfect, even this branch of liberty has its excrescences that might be pruned. I mean particularly that license which of late has too much prevailed of publishing epistolary correspondences. Such a fashion, for I know not what else to call it, is extremely pernicious. At present, it satisfies the curiosity of the public ; but for the future, it will tend to restrain that unsuspecting openness, which is the principal delight of writing to our friends. I am sorry to say by experience, that the letters which contain the most sincere, and perhaps hasty observations upon persons, times, and circumstances, are often reserved as treasures, and hoarded up, as misers hoard gold ; like which, they lie concealed in cabinets and strong boxes for some time, till chancing to fall into the hands of an extravagant heir, or an injudicious executor, they are not only brought into light, but dispersed and exposed, so as to become the property of the whole world. Let me advise you therefore, my HAMILTON, when you give your opinion upon any important subject, to consider it well, before you commit your thoughts to paper. Express yourself with diffidence. Preserve a prudent restraint over the sallies of wit and humour : and be cautious in all declarations of friendship ; as the very common offers of civility, are too often explained into undesigned engagements.

I own, HAM, I find myself under no small difficulty in discussing this volume of SWIFT's letters. General  
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criticisms will be attended with obscurity: and it would be tedious to consider them in their exact order. I shall endeavour therefore, to take a review only of what seems to deserve your attention. Let us begin with the letters that passed between Dr. SWIFT and Mr. POPE. The correspondence had commenced in a very early part of Mr. POPE's life, and was carried on with scarce any interruption from the death of the Queen. If we may judge of Mr. POPE from his works, his chief aim was to be esteemed a man of virtue. His letters are written in that style. His last volumes are all of the moral kind. He has avoided trifles, and consequently has escaped a rock which has proved very injurious to SWIFT's reputation. He has given his imagination full scope, and yet has preserved a perpetual guard upon his conduct. The constitution of his body and mind might early incline him to habits of caution and reserve. The treatment which he met afterwards from an innumerable tribe of adversaries, confirmed those habits, and made him slower than the *Dean* in pronouncing his judgement upon persons and things. His prose writings are little less harmonious than his verse: and his voice in common conversation was so naturally musical, that I remember honest TOM SOUTHERNE used always to call him *The little nightingale*. His manners were delicate, easy, and engaging: and he treated his friends with a politeness that charmed, and a generosity that was much to his honour. Every guest was made happy within his doors. Pleasure dwelt under his roof, and

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