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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

Of Dr. Sprat, Bishop of Rochester.

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toric; his diction is harsh, his periods tedious; and when he becomes a prose-writer, the majesty, that attends his poetry, vanishes, and is entirely lost: yet, with all his faults, and exclusive of his character as a poet, he must ever remain the only learned author of that tasteless age in which he flourished: and it is probable, that his great attention to the Latin language, might have rendered him less correct, than he otherwise would have been, in his native tongue.

HARRINGTON has his admirers, he may possibly have his merits, but they *flow not* in his style. A later writer, of the same republican principles, has far excelled him; I mean ALGERNON SYDNEY, whose discourses concerning government are admirably written, and contain great historical knowledge, and a remarkable propriety of diction; so that his name, in my opinion, ought to be much higher established in the temple of literature, than I have hitherto found it placed.

LORD CLARENDON, is an historian whose dignity of expression has justly given him the preference to any of our biographical authors. But his periods are the *periods of a mile*. His parentheses embarrass the sense of his narration, and certain inaccuracies, appearing throughout his works, are delivered with a formality that renders them still more conspicuous.

Among our English writers, few men have gained a greater character for elegance and correctness, than SPRAT, Bishop of *Rocheſter*, and few men have deserved it less. When I have read his works, I have always

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wondered from whence such a piece of good fortune might have arisen, and could only attribute it to Mr. COWLEY, who, in a very delicate copy of verses, has celebrated his friend Dr. SPRAT for eloquence, wit, and a certain *candid style*, which the poet compares to the river *Thames*, gliding with an even current, and displaying the most beautiful appearances of nature. Poets and painters have their favourites, whom they transmit to posterity in what colours and attitudes they please: but I am mistaken, if, upon a review of SPRAT'S works, his language will not sooner give you an idea of one of the insignificant tottering boats upon the *Thames*, than of the smooth noble current of the river itself.

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE is an easy, careless, incorrect writer, elegantly negligent, politely learned, and engagingly familiar.

Thus, my dear HAM, I have cursorily mentioned some of the brightest sons of fame among our English authors, only to point out to you the preference due to Dr. SWIFT: but he is not entitled alone to the olive garland: he has had his coadjutors in the victory. The triumvirate, to whom we owe an elegance and propriety unknown to our forefathers, are SWIFT, ADDISON, and BOLINGBROKE. At the sight of such names, no dispute can arise in preferring the English moderns to the English antients. The present century, and indeed all future generations may be congratulated upon the acquisition of three such men.

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