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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 character of Dr. Arbuthnot.

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## 164 REMARKS ON THE LIFE

I should have been much pleased, in finding some of Dr. ARBUTHNOT's letters among this collection. Although he was justly celebrated for wit and learning, there was an excellence in his character more amiable than all his other qualifications: I mean the excellence of his heart. He has shewed himself equal to any of his cotemporaries in humour and vivacity: and he was superior to most men in acts of humanity and benevolence: his very sarcasms are the satirical strokes of good-nature; they are like slaps on the face given in jest, the effects of which may raise blushes, but no blackness will appear after the blows. He laughs as jovially as an attendant upon BACCHUS, but continues as sober and considerate as a disciple of SOCRATES. He is seldom serious, except in his attacks upon vice; and then his spirit rises with a manly strength, and a noble indignation. His epitaph upon CHARTRES <sup>a</sup> (allowing one small alteration, the word *permitted*, instead of *connived at*) is a complete, and a masterly composition in its kind. No man exceeded him in the moral duties of life: a merit still more to his honour, as the ambitious powers of wit and genius are seldom submissive enough to confine themselves within the limitations of morality. In his letter to Mr. POPE <sup>b</sup>, written, as it were, upon his death-bed, he discovers such a noble fortitude of mind at the approach of his

<sup>a</sup> See POPE's Works, by WARBURTON, Vol. III, page 219.

<sup>b</sup> See again POPE by WARBURTON, Vol. VIII. Letter XLVII.

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dissolution, as could only be inspired by a clear conscience, and the calm retrospect of an uninterrupted series of virtue. The DEAN<sup>a</sup> laments the loss of him with a pathetic sincerity, "*The death of Mr. GAY and the Doctor*<sup>b</sup> (says he to Mr. POPE) *have been terrible wounds near my heart. Their living would have been a great comfort to me, although I should never have seen them; like a sum of money in a bank, from which I should receive at least annual interest, as I do from you, and have done from Lord BOLINGBROKE.*" I have chosen this last quotation, not more in honour of SWIFT's tenderness and affection to those whom he esteemed, than with a design of specifying to you as fine a group of friends<sup>c</sup>, as have appeared since the Augustan age. As their letters were not intended for the public, perhaps I was unreasonable in looking for medals, and not being contented with the common current species. In our prejudices of favour or aversion we are apt to be deceived by names; nor can it be doubted, that such writers might have furnished us with familiar letters, very different from those, which have been collected in this seventh volume. They are filled indeed (especially in the correspondence between SWIFT and POPE) with the strongest expressions of mutual esteem; but those expressions are repeated too often. When friendship has subsisted so long, that time can-

<sup>a</sup> SWIFT'S Works, Vol. VII, Letter LXX.

<sup>b</sup> ARBUTHNOT.

<sup>c</sup> Lord BOLINGBROKE, SWIFT, POPE, ARBUTHNOT, GAY.