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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 situation of his health, and mind, from the year 1739 to his death, at the latter end of October 1745.

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

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degrees. In the year 1736. I remember him seized with a violent fit of giddiness. He was at that time writing a satirical poem, called *The Legion Club*; but he found the effects of his giddiness so dreadful, that he left the poem unfinished; and never afterwards attempted a composition of any length either in verse or prose. However, his conversation still remained the same; lively and severe; but his memory gradually grew worse and worse: and as that decreased, and was impaired, he appeared every day more fretful and impatient. From the year *thirty-nine* to the latter end of the year *forty-one*, his friends found his passions so violent and ungovernable, his memory so decayed, and his reason so depraved, that they took the utmost precautions to keep all strangers from approaching him: for, till then, he had not appeared totally incapable of conversation: but, early in the year *forty-two*, the small remains of his understanding became entirely confused, and the violence of his rage increased absolutely to a degree of madness. In this miserable state he seemed to be appointed as the first proper inhabitant for his own hospital: especially as from an outrageous lunatic, he sunk afterwards into a quiet, speechless idiot; and dragged out the remainder of his life in that helpless situation. He died towards the latter end of *October* 1745. The manner of his death was easy, without the least pang or convulsion. Even the rattling in his throat was scarce sufficient to give any alarm to his attendants, till within some very little time before he expired. A man in possession of his reason would have wished for such a kind of dissolution; but SWIFT was totally insensible of happiness

happiness or pain: he had not even the power or expression of a child, appearing, for some years before his death, reserved only as an example to mortify human pride, and to reverse that fine description of human nature, which is given us by *Shakespeare* in an inimitable manner: "*What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.*" Thus poets paint; but how vain and perishable is the picture? The smallest thunderbolt from heaven blasts it in a moment, and every tinct is so effectually obliterated, that scarce the outlines of the figure remain.

SWIFT, as I have hinted in a former letter<sup>a</sup>, certainly foresaw his fate. His frequent attacks of giddiness, and his manifest defect of memory, gave room for such apprehensions. I have often heard him lament the state of childhood, and idiotism, to which some of the greatest men of this nation were reduced before their death. He mentioned, as examples within his own time, the duke of MARLBOROUGH, and Lord SOMERS: and when he cited these melancholy instances, it was always with a heavy sigh, and with gestures that shewed great uneasiness, as if he felt an impulse of what was to happen to him before he died.

Unless I am misinformed, he died worth about twelve thousand pounds, inclusive of the specific legacies mentioned in his will, and which may be computed at the

<sup>a</sup> See Letter VI.