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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 Battle of the Books.

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which are written in ridicule of bad critics, dull commentators, and the whole fraternity of Grub-street philosophers. *The Introduction* abounds with wit and humour: but the author never loses the least opportunity of venting his keenest satyr against Mr. DRYDEN, and consequently loads with insults the greatest, although the least prosperous, of our English poets. Yet who can avoid smiling, when he finds the *Hind and Panther* mentioned as *a complete abstract of sixteen thousand schoolmen*, and when TOMMY PORTS is supposed written by *the same hand*, as *a supplement to the former work*? I am willing to imagine, that DRYDEN, in some manner or other, had offended my friend Dr. SWIFT, who, otherwise, I hope, would have been more indulgent to the errors of a man oppressed by poverty, driven on by party, and bewildered by religion.

But although our satyrical author, now-and-then, may have indulged himself in some personal animosities, or may have taken freedoms not so perfectly consistent with that solemn decency, which is required from a clergyman; yet, throughout the whole piece, there is a vein of ridicule and good humour, that laughs pedantry and affectation into the lowest degree of contempt, and exposes the character of PETER and JACK in such a manner, as never will be forgiven, and never can be answered.

The *Battle of the Books* took its rise from the controversy between Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE and Mr. WOTTON: a controversy which made much noise, and employed many pens, towards the latter end of the last century.

This

This humorous treatise is drawn up in an heroic comic style, in which SWIFT, with great wit and spirit, gives the victory to the former. The general plan is excellent; but particular parts are defective. The frequent chasms puzzle and interrupt the narrative: they neither convey any latent ideas, nor point out any distant or occult sarcasms. Some characters are barely touched upon, which might have been extended; others are enlarged, which might have been contracted. The name of HORACE is scarce inserted, and VIRGIL is introduced only for an opportunity of comparing his translator DRYDEN, to *the Lady in a Lobster: to a Mouse under a Canopy of State: and to a scrivelled Beau within the Penthouse of a full-bottomed Perriwig*. These similies carry the true stamp of ridicule: but rancour must be very prevalent in the heart of an author, who could overlook the merits of DRYDEN; many of whose dedications and prefaces are as fine compositions, and as just pieces of criticism, as any in our language. The translation of VIRGIL was a work of haste and indigence: DRYDEN was equal to the undertaking, but unfortunate during the conduct of it.

And now, as I have mentioned VIRGIL, and as I indulge myself in an unlimited manner of expressing to you my thoughts, I must plead that kind of habit for inserting a conjecture, which, perhaps, is purely chimerical, but which, in the pursuit of it, has given me no small degree of pleasure, as the motive tends to vindicate one of your favourite poets from the censure of ingratitude.

The critics have been justly surpris'd, that VIRGIL seems entirely to have neglected HORACE, when it is