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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 criticism on Virgil, attempting to prove, that he has mentioned Horace.

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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

evident, that HORACE takes frequent occasions of expressing the greatest tenderness, esteem, and gratitude, for VIRGIL. They have endeavoured to account for this neglect, by supposing, that some of VIRGIL's poems have been lost; otherwise, who could imagine, that the author of the *Æneid* should have passed over in silence the name of so excellent, and so estimable a friend? In the Greek and Roman writers it is not to be doubted, that there are many expressions, which, at the time when written, were evident marks to distinguish particular characters. These, by the course of years, are now rendered doubtful and obscure. HORACE's *Glycon* was always taken for a gladiator, till at the bottom of the statue of the HERCULES FARNESE an old inscription was discovered, that shews it was so called from the name of the famous sculptor who made it. Many passages in Mr. POPE's poems, which are now easily explained, may, in a few centuries, become entirely unintelligible, and (excuse the improbability of the circumstance) when it is no longer remembered that he lived at *Twitnam*, he will no longer be known for *the Swan of Thames*.

VIRGIL, in his *Eclogues*, celebrates POLLIO, VARUS, and GALLUS, and he dedicates his *Georgics* to MECÆNAS: but in the *Æneid*, he could not introduce any of his cotemporaries, except by feigned names: and even then, the connexion of the fable must be preserved, and some poetical differences must be allowed. Such a conduct has induced some of the commentators to affix various names to particular characters in the *Æneid*. They have mentioned MARIUS, POMPEY, CURIO, and others; but

but their hints and sketches have been imperfect, and written at random.

Bishop ATTERBURY is more explicit. That learned prelate, in all the elegance and delicacy of criticism, illustrates the passage relating to IAPIS, and fixes to it the name and character of ANTONIUS MUSA, an eminent physician, and polite scholar, at Rome. The BARRY a of his day.

From these attempts, I have been encouraged to search for the character of HORACE; and instead of an imperfect picture, I hope, I shall be able to point out a very remarkable likeness in the following lines.

*Et amicum Cretea musis,  
Cretea musarum comitem, cui carmina semper  
Et citharæ cordi, numerosque intendere nervis;  
Semper equos, atque arma virum, pugnasque canebat.*

An ode in HORACE, which appears, by the mention of TIRIDATES, to have been written at the same time with the seventh book of VIRGIL, bears a very striking resemblance to some part of this quotation. You remember

*Musis amicus tristitiam et metus  
Tradam protervis in mare Creticum  
Portare ventis.*

The *Musis amicus* was, in all probability, a synonymous name of HORACE, by which he was then distin-

gished, \* Dr. EDWARD BARRY of Dublin.

## 200 REMARKS ON THE LIFE

guished, and perfectly well known at *Rome*. Such an appellation might be given to him from this gay and spirited ode. He begins it, by delivering at once all his cares and fears to be buried in the Cretan sea. *TIBULLUS* and *ANACREON* have the same general sentiment; but *HORACE* chooses this particular part of the ocean for the eternal grave of all his cares. A circumstance which might occasion *VIRGIL* to give him the name of *CRETEAS*: and I dare say, *HAM*, you will agree with me in observing, that *VIRGIL* repeats that name with a certain tenderness and esteem, as if he was unwilling to quit the subject, and as if he could wish to dwell longer in the description of so excellent a genius, and so remarkable a poet.

But the line,

*Et citharæ cordi, numerosque intendere nervis,*

seems directly to point out *HORACE*, and to celebrate him for his lyric performances. *MONSIEUR DACIER*, in the preface to his *HORACE*, gives an history of the progress and decay of lyric poetry. He observes, that from the foundation of *Rome* to the reign of *AUGUSTUS CÆSAR* (a space of above seven hundred years) not one lyric poet had appeared. *HORACE* was the first Roman, who, with a surprising natural genius, having studied and acquired the beauty and strength of numbers, formed himself upon the Grecian plan, and became the best Latin lyric poet of the Augustan age. From whence, it almost

AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 201

almost evidently appears, that this passage can only be adapted to him.

Thus far, without straining the explanation of these lines, I would willingly hope, that the features of HORACE are discernible. The last verse indeed does not seem to answer so exactly his poetical character.

*Semper equos, atque arma virum, pugnasque canebat.*

Let us try, if we cannot banish the objection, and establish a perfect confirmation of the resemblance.

Several of the odes of HORACE are remarkably fine in the warlike strain, particularly the ode to AUGUSTUS after the battle of *Actium*, when the senate had agreed to address solemn hymns to the Emperor in the same manner as to the celestial deities. The ode beginning *Cælo tonantem*, and occasioned by the conquest over the Britons and Persians, is full of fire. But the address to ASINIUS POLLIO breathes war and slaughter still in a more exalted strain.

*Jam nunc minaci murmure cornuum  
Perstringis aures : jam litui strepunt :  
Jam fulgor armorum fugaces  
Terret equos, equitumque vultus.*

MONSIEUR SANADON observes, that this stanza, and the four which follow it, are written with the greatest spirit of lyric poetry. His expression is *La force de Poésie lyrique ne va point au de là.*

It is very certain, that HORACE was a perfect master of the poetical array of battle, the din of war, and the sound  
of

of clarions : or, in the words of VIRGIL, *equos, atque arma virum, pugnasque canebat*. But, notwithstanding his powers in that style, he seems constantly desirous of declining any long poem, or laboured performance, upon these subjects. In his ode beginning *Motum ex Metello*, he advises ASINIUS POLLIO to lay aside all intentions of writing tragedy, and he farther urges him to complete a poem upon the civil wars, between ANTONY and OCTAVIUS: but he damps this advice, by pointing out the danger of the theme. He tells POLLIO,

*Periculosæ plenum opus alexæ  
Tractas ; et incedis per ignes  
Suppositos cineri doloso.*

Thus, while he expatiates upon the difficulty of the undertaking, he shews himself superior to the labours that deter him. As a Poet, we may be assured he was equal to the task : as a politician, we may presume, he avoided it. He was unwilling to remind his imperial master of a war, in which he had appeared in arms against his prince : and in which, the character of AUGUSTUS had not been distinguished with the most perfect degree of lustre. Yet, that such a kind of work was expected from him, may undoubtedly be deduced from what he says in one of his odes to MECÆNAS.

*Tuque pedestribus  
Dices historiis prælia Cæsaris,  
Mecænas, MELIUS.*

Here

AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 203

Here you see, HORACE assigns to his patron MECÆNAS all the laurels that might accrue from a complete poem upon the wars of AUGUSTUS: and in another place, the poet, with more modesty than justice, says,

*Cupidum, pater optime, vires  
Deficiunt: neque enim quisvis horrentia pilis  
Agmina, nec fracta pereuntes cuspide Gallos,  
Aut labentis equo describat vulnera Parthi.*

These lines are in such a strain, as to demonstrate the powers of the muse much less deficient than the will. It is very probable therefore, that, during the time, while the public expectations were raised in hopes of seeing HORACE undertake some poem entirely formed upon the military plan, VIRGIL might have composed that part of the *Æneid* from whence I have drawn my quotation, and might very justly have given HORACE the character of CRETEAS, not only in consequence of the odes already written, but under a kind of certainty, of seeing future and more perfect poems in the same strain.

I submit to your judgment, whether these surmises are just. I really think they bear a great resemblance to truth. Positive assertions on such doubtful points, I leave to more established critics: and return from the civil wars in *Italy*, to the civil wars in St JAMES'S library.

The two chief heroes among the modern generals, are WOTTON and BENTLEY. Their figures are displayed in the most disadvantageous attitudes. The former is described,