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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

Letter III.

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L E T T E R III.

I Join with you entirely in thinking STELLA one of the most unfortunate of her sex. Her catastrophe was such as might have drawn pity from a breast less susceptible of that passion than yours. Injurious treatment, disappointed love, a long lingering illness, were all circumstances of the melancholy kind. Be not surprized, my HAMILTON, when I tell you, that he never spoke of her without a sigh: for such is the perverseness of human nature, that we bewail those persons dead, whom we treated cruelly when living. But, I am making reflections, when I intended to write memoirs. Let us return to SWIFT.

Upon the death of Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE he came to *London*, and took the earliest opportunity of delivering a petition to King WILLIAM, under the claim of a promise made by his Majesty to Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE, "That Mr. SWIFT should have the first vacancy, which might happen among the prebends of *Westminster* or *Canterbury*." The promises of kings are often a kind of chaff, which the breath of a minister bloweth, and scattereth away from the face of a court. The petition had no effect. It was either totally forgotten, or drowned amidst the clamours of more urgent claims. From this first disappointment, may probably be

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be dated that bitterness towards kings, and courtiers, which is to be found so universally dispersed throughout his works.

After a long and fruitless attendance at *Whitehall*, SWIFT reluctantly gave up all thoughts of a settlement in *England*. He had dedicated Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE's works to the King. The dedication was neglected, nor did his Majesty take the least notice of him after Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE's death. What then was to be done? honour, or to use a properer word, pride hindered him from staying long in a state of servility and contempt. He complied therefore with an invitation from the Earl of BERKLEY (appointed one of the Lords Justices in *Ireland*) to attend him as his chaplain and private secretary. Lord BERKLEY landed near *Waterford*, and Mr. SWIFT acted as secretary during the whole journey to *Dublin*. But another of Lord BERKLEY's attendants, whose name was BUSH, had, by this time, insinuated himself into the Earl's favour, and had *whispered* to his Lordship, that the post of secretary was not proper for a clergyman, to whom only church preferments could be suitable or advantageous. Lord BERKLEY listened perhaps too attentively to these insinuations, and making some slight apology to Mr. SWIFT, divested him of that office, and bestowed it upon Mr. BUSH. Here again was another disappointment, and a fresh object of indignation. The treatment was thought injurious, and SWIFT expressed his sensibility of it in a short, but satirical copy of verses entitled *The Discovery*.

However, during the government of the Earls of BERKLEY and GALWAY, who were jointly Lords Justices of *Ireland*, two livings, *Laracor* and *Rathbeggan*, were bestowed upon Mr. SWIFT. The first of these rectories was worth about two hundred, and the latter about sixty pounds a year, and they were the only church preferments that he enjoyed 'till he was appointed Dean of *St. Patrick's*, in the year seventeen hundred and thirteen.

As soon as he had taken possession of his two livings, he went to reside at *Laracor*, and gave public notice to his parishioners, that he would read prayers on every Wednesday and Friday. Upon the subsequent Wednesday the bell was rung, and the Rector attended in his desk, when after having sat some time, and finding the congregation to consist only of himself, and his clerk ROGER, he began with great composure and gravity, but with a turn peculiar to himself, "Dearly beloved ROGER, the scripture moveth you and me in sundry places." And then proceeded regularly through the whole service. I mention this trifling circumstance only to shew you, that he could not resist a vein of humour whenever he had an opportunity of exerting it.

As I have given you a particular example of his humour, let me give you a particular instance of his pride: especially as it comes in properly enough in point of time.

Whilst SWIFT was chaplain to Lord BERKLEY, his only sister, by the consent and approbation of her uncles

cles and relations, was married to a man in trade, whose fortune, character, and situation, were esteemed, by all her friends, suitable for her in every respect. But, the marriage was entirely disagreeable to her brother. It seemed to interrupt those ambitious views, which he had long since formed: He grew outrageous at the thoughts of being brother-in-law to a tradesman. He utterly refused all reconciliation with his sister, nor would he even listen to the entreaties of his mother, who came over to *Ireland*, under the strongest hopes of pacifying his anger, having, in every other instance found him a dutiful, and an obedient son: but his pride was not to be conquered, and Mrs. SWIFT finding her son inflexible, hastened back to *Leicester*, where she continued till her death.

During his mother's life time, he scarce ever failed to pay her an annual visit. But his manner of travelling was as singular as any other of his actions. He often went in a waggon, but more frequently walked from *Holyhead* to *Leicester*, *London*, or any other part of *England*. He generally chose to dine with waggoners, hostlers, and persons of that rank; and he used to lye at night in houses where he found written over the door *Lodgings for a penny*. He delighted in scenes of low life. The vulgar dialect was not only a fund of humour for him, but I verily believe was acceptable to his nature; otherwise I know not how to account for the many filthy ideas, and indecent expressions (I mean indecent in point of cleanliness and delicacy) that will be found throughout his works.

I need not tell you, that a strict residence at *Laracor*, was not in the least suitable to his disposition. He was perpetually making excursions not only to *Dublin*, and other parts of *Ireland*, but into *England*, especially to *London*. So rambling a disposition, occasioned to him a considerable loss. The rich deanery of *Derry* became vacant at this time, and was intended for him by Lord BERKLEY, if Dr. KING, then Bishop of *Derry*, and afterwards Archbishop of *Dublin*, had not interposed: entreating with great earnestness, that the deanery might be given to some grave and elderly Divine, rather than to so young a man; "because (added the Bishop) the situation of *Derry* is in the midst of presbyterians, and I should be glad of a clergyman, who could be of assistance to me. I have no objection to Mr. SWIFT. I know him to be a sprightly ingenious young man; but instead of residing, I dare say, he will be eternally flying backwards and forwards to *London*, and therefore I entreat, that he may be provided for in some other place."

SWIFT was accordingly set aside on account of youth, but, as if his stars had destined to him a parallel revenge, he lived to see the Bishop of *Derry* afterwards set aside on account of age. That Prelate had been Archbishop of *Dublin* many years, and had been long celebrated for his wit and learning, when Dr. LINDSEY, the Primate of *Ireland*, died. Upon his death, Archbishop KING immediately made claim to the Primacy, as a preferment to which he had a right from his

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his station in the see of *Dublin*, and from his acknowledged character in the church. Neither of these pretensions were prevalent. He was looked upon as *too far advanced in years* to be removed. The reason alledged was as mortifying as the refusal itself: but the Archbishop had no opportunity of shewing his resentment, except to the new Primate Dr. BOLTER, whom he received at his own house, and in his dining parlour, without rising from his chair, and to whom he made an apology, by saying, in his usual strain of wit, and with his usual sneering countenance, "My Lord, I am certain your Grace will forgive me, because, *You know, I am too old to rise.*"

In the year 1701, SWIFT took his Doctor's degree, and towards the latter end of that year, or according to our absurd way of reckoning, in the year $17\frac{0}{2}$ King WILLIAM died. Queen ANN's reign will open a new scene, and will probably afford me materials for more letters than one. The more the better, when in each of them I can assure you, that your behaviour, as well as my own inclinations, oblige me to be,

Your affectionate Father,

O R R E R Y.

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