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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

Of Gassendi.

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AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 115

“ his friends, admired by his scholars, and honoured by the Athenians.” Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE imputes this injustice “ to the envy, and malignity of the Stoics, and to some gross pretenders, who assumed the denomination of that sect : who mistook his favourite principle” (THAT ALL HAPPINESS CONSISTED IN PLEASURE) “ by confining it to sensual pleasure only. To these succeeded the Christians, who esteemed his principles of natural philosophy more opposite to those of our religion than either the Platonists, the Peripatetics, or even the Stoics themselves.” This is the opinion, and these are almost the exact words of the great Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE.

SWIFT equally explodes EPICURUS, and the more modern philosophers DESCARTES and GASSENDI.

DESCARTES was a knight errant in philosophy, perpetually mistaking windmills for giants ; yet by the strength of a warm imagination he started some opinions, which probably put Sir ISAAC NEWTON, and others, on making many experiments that produced most useful discoveries.

GASSENDI was esteemed one of the greatest ornaments of FRANCE. He was a doctor of divinity, and royal professor of mathematics. He was born in Provence in 1592, and died in 1655. With great industry he collected whatever related to the person, and to the philosophy of EPICURUS, the latter of which, he has reduced into a compleat system.

I have now, my HAMILTON, cursorily gone through the characters of such ghosts, as are nominally specified

specified by GULLIVER. I may be wrong either in my account, or in my observations: and I shall rejoice to be confuted by you in any point of learning whatever.

The description of the STRULDBRUGGS, in the tenth chapter, is an instructive piece of morality: for, if we consider it in a serious light, it tends to reconcile us to our final dissolution. Death, when set in contrast to the immortality of the STRULDBRUGGS, is no longer the King of Terrors: he loses his sting: he appears to us as a friend: and we cheerfully obey his summons, because it brings certain relief to the greatest miseries. It is in this description, that SWIFT shines in a particular manner. He probably felt in himself the effects of approaching age, and tacitly dreaded that period of life, in which he might become a representative of those *miserable immortals*. His apprehensions were unfortunately fulfilled. He lived to be the most melancholy sight that was ever beheld: yet, even in that condition, he continued to instruct, by appearing a providential instance to mortify the vanity, which is too apt to arise in the human breast. Our life cannot be pronounced happy, till the last scene is closed with ease and resignation: the mind still continuing to preserve its usual dignity, and falling into the arms of death, as a wearied traveller sinks into rest. This is that *Euthanasia* which AUGUSTUS often desired, which ANTONINUS PIUS enjoyed, and for which every wise man will pray.