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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

Remarks upon A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons in Ireland, to a Member of the House of Commons in England, concerning the Sacramental Test.

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LETTER XVI.

WHAT is to be done, my HAMILTON, with the fourth volume of SWIFT'S works? How can I amuse you with any remarks from a collection of tracts, not only upon exceeding grave subjects, but entirely relative to the kingdom of *Ireland*? not only local, but temporary? In the beginning of the volume is a pamphlet entitled *A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons in Ireland, to a Member of the House of Commons in England, concerning the Sacramental Test, written in the year 1708*: and it is preceded by an explanatory advertisement, that was either dictated, or strictly revised by the Dean himself. He held the dissenters in the utmost degree of ridicule and detestation. He had an openness in his disposition, and a frankness in his conduct, that bore an abhorrence to all kind of reserve: even to discretion. Solemnities and outward forms were despised by him. His humorous disposition tempted him to actions inconsistent with the dignity of a clergyman: and such flights drew upon him the general character of an irreligious man. I remember to have heard a story of him that fully shews how little he regarded certain ceremonies, which ought always to be observed with respect. Soon after he had been
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made Dean of St. PATRICK'S, he was loitering one Sunday in the afternoon at the house of Dr. RAYMOND (with whom he had dined) at *Trim*, a little town near *Dublin*, of which the Doctor was vicar. The bell had rung: the parishioners were assembled, for evening prayers: and Dr. RAYMOND was preparing to go to the church, which was scarce two hundred yards from his house. "RAYMOND, said the Dean, "I'll lay you a crown I will begin prayers before you this afternoon." "I accept the wager," replied Dr. RAYMOND: and immediately they both ran as fast as they could towards the church. RAYMOND, who was much the nimbler man of the two, arrived first at the door: and when he entered the church, walked decently towards the reading desk. SWIFT never slackened his pace, but, running up the aisle, left Dr. RAYMOND behind him in the middle of it, and stepping into the reading desk, without putting on a surplice, or opening the prayer-book, began the liturgy in an audible voice, and continued to repeat the service sufficiently long to win his wager. To such a disposition it is impossible that the gravity of nonconformists could be agreeable. The dislike was mutual on both sides. Dr. SWIFT hated all fanatics: all fanatics hated Dr. SWIFT. The pamphlet, which now lies before me, is particularly written against *repealing the test act*: and whoever considers himself related to the kingdom of *Ireland*, will find in it some arguments of weight and consideration, in case any such repeal should ever be attempted there.