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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

Some reflections upon Political pamphlets, and upon party.

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REMARKS ON THE LIFE
AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 133

to many noble families, descended from persons mentioned in *the Examiners*, make me willing to take as slight notice as possible even of the wittiest passages in those papers, because many of those passages arise from personal reflections, or party sarcasms. In general, the several points relating to the national debt (alas! how increased since the year seventeen hundred and ten) the too long continuance of the war, and other public topics of complaint are melancholy truths, justly becoming the pen of a man who loves his country.

Within these last forty years, the political treatises have been so numerous, so various, so local, and so temporary, that each new pamphlet has succeeded its predecessor, like a youthful son to an antient father amidst a multiplicity of followers, admirers, and dependants, whilst the antiquated Sire having *strutted and foamed his hour upon the stage, is heard no more*, but lies silent, and almost entirely forgotten, except by a few friends and cotemporaries, who accidentally remember some of his just observations, or prophetic aphorisms, which they have lived to see accomplished. Thus has it fared even in my time, with the EXAMINERS, the FREEHOLDERS, and the CRAFTSMAN: and the same fate will attend most writings of that sort, which being framed to serve particular views, fulfill the purport of their creation, and then perish: while works of a more liberal and diffusive kind are acceptable to all persons, and all times; and may assume to themselves, a certain prospect of surviving to the latest posterity.

But my dearest HAMILTON, when you enter into the commerce of life, you will be obliged, in your own defence, to look into every thing that has been written upon political subjects. In *England*, a man cannot keep up a conversation without being well versed in politics. In whatever other point of learning he may be deficient, he certainly must not appear superficial in state affairs. He must chuse his party; and he must stick to the choice. *Non revocare gradum* must be his motto; and Heaven forgive you, my dear son, if the *gradus* now and then enforces you to act against self conviction.

If party, and the consequences of it had arisen to that height among the Romans and Grecians, as it has arisen of late years among the English, their poets would probably have added *her* to the three furies, and would have placed her in hell, as a fit companion for TYSIPHONE, MEGARA, and ALECTO, from whence, according to their description, she might have made excursions upon earth, only with an intention to destroy, confound, mislead, and disunite mankind.

It is true, that all countries have their parties and their factions. But there is a certain contagious distemper of this sort, so peculiar to the British islands, that, I believe, it is unknown to every other part of the world. It increases our natural gloom, and it makes us so averse to each other, that it keeps men of the best morals, and most social inclinations, in one continued state of warfare and opposition. Must not the source of this malady arise rather from the heart, than from

the head? from the different operations of our passions,
than of our reason?

*Furoræ cæcus, an rapit vis acrior,
An culpa?*

SWIFT, a man of violent passions, was, in consequence of those passions, violent in his party: but as his capacity and genius were so extraordinary and extensive, even his party writings carry with them dignity and instruction: and in that light I wish you to read *the Examiners*, where you will find a nervous style, a clear diction, and great knowledge of the true landed interest of *England*.

I am,

My dear HAMILTON,

Your ever affectionate Father,

O R R E R Y.

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