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JONATHAN SWIFT

A CRITICAL ESSAY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

IT is always illuminating to set a great man beside his equals: and Pope did that for Swift in the lines at the beginning of the *Dunciad*:

> O Thou! whatever title please thine ear,
> Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff or Gulliver,
> Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
> Or laugh and shake in Rab'lais' easy-chair . . .

But Pope's eulogy is rather wide of the mark. Swift's serious air has only a slight resemblance to Cervantes': the ironic biting wit of the one has little of the free, cheerful mirth of the other. When in his madness Don Quixote challenged the lions to leave their cage, when he went down into the Cave of Montesino, and when he overthrew the Knight of the Looking-Glasses, he exhibited the sublime of human nature. He has all the great virtues: he is neither vain, nor avaricious, nor envious, nor cowardly. Human pretentiousness, pettiness and nastiness are the subjects of even the most cheerful books of *Gulliver's Travels*. When Samson Carrasco, the Bachelor of Salamanca, disguised as the Knight of the White Moon, vanquished Don Quixote, and charged him on his knightly honour to return for a year to La Mancha, Don Antonio Morena grieved and said: "Oh, Sir, God forgive you the wrong you do the whole world in seeking to recover the pleasantest madman in the world. . . . Never may he recover." If Swift had written

Don Quixote, there would have been no Don Antonio to say this. Swift played the Knight of the White Moon to Mankind: he thought that all the evils in the world arose from men getting astride their broomsticks of fancy or imagination or enthusiasm and setting off on Quixotic errands. Through the folly of human nature Cervantes shows the heights it can reach. That is true even of Sancho Panza, who said, Where there is music, there cannot be ill, and who by following the precept of his master, Always to incline to pity, when in doubt, proved himself a good governor of an island. Cervantes sheds a soft light on tracts of the soul that only the great poets visit, touches this colour and that of hill, cloud and valley. Swift, scornful, harsh, biting, disillusioned, pent up in his task of "swingeing the rogues" has none of this in him.

Rabelais' chair is not an easy-chair when Swift sits in it. The Author's "Prologue" to *Pantagruel* tells how the story of Gargantua had cured many people of the toothache, and made even the lepers forget their disease and stop clattering their teeth. One could not claim such cures for *A Modest Proposal* or for *Directions to Servants*. Swift cured toothache by probing it down to the nerve, and healed leprosy by excising it with a bitter ironic humour that leaves us white with pain. Swift, who was seen to laugh out only once or twice in his life, who laughed inwardly when he did laugh and showed his laughter only by the sucking-in of his cheeks, was not a jovial, boisterous Gargantua.

Fielding said that there was more of Lucian in Swift than there was of Rabelais or Cervantes, and he came nearer the truth than Pope. Again and again Lucian seems to give the cue to Swift: when, for instance, the gentleman who had been transformed into an ass gives

a veracious account of his adventures; or when Menippus, looking down from the moon, sees the little Argives and the little Lacedemonians struggling for a bit of ground no bigger than an Aegyptian lentil; and when the Cock, who had been Euphorbus, told the Cobbler that at the Fall of Troy Helen was as old as Hecuba, and that she never had been a great beauty, for that, taking after her mother, a swan, she had too long a neck. Lucian is a master of irony when in *The Lover of Lies* he makes even the longest-bearded of the philosophers listen with reverence to the wonders wrought by the charmed broomstick, and may have been one of Swift's teachers in the art. Then he nearly always gives his satire an imaginative dress, embodies it in some lively story of Charon or Jupiter; and here again Swift may be his pupil. Yet they were different in manner and temper. One thinks of Lucian as a gay, ironic mocker, the kind of person fitted to lead the ring in a laughing intelligentsia. He was something of a sophist, reading his Dialogues and Discourses like the sophists he so often ridiculed to the élite of the cities of Greece and Asia Minor. He made merry with his sceptical friends over what they all had agreed to count absurd in the myths of the Gods and the contradictory doctrines of the "philosophers."

There is a weight and drive about Swift's work which distinguish it from Lucian's. From the beginning it was winged with moral indignation. In later life pride and self-conceit took hold of him: they had much to do with his leaving the Whigs for the Tories and with the patriotism of the Drapier's Letters: they darkened the misanthropy of *Gulliver's Travels*. Yet he really thought the Tories the better party, and genuinely hated injustice. The ignorance that makes men the gulls of fools, and the original stupidity that makes them sloven

servants and strutting empty-headed masters, intensified the bitterness and harshness that nature had put in his blood. He despised the shams with which men delude themselves into importance. He hated the wickedness that results in war and the oppression of peoples and the worship of money and pretence. He hated them with a fury that carried him to believe that man, both in body and mind, is a despicable and contemptible being. There is none of this terrible indignation in Lucian.

It is with such distinctions as these in my mind that I have written this study of Swift.

I venture to put forward three particular reasons for making it:

The first is that there are so many Swifts in the gallery of his critics, that one has to imagine him for one's self. Swift the man was hated and loved with equal intensity in his own time; and the conflict has lasted till ours. Casual remarks and phrases, like, "Only a woman's hair," and, "Not to let children come near me hardly," have been used both to damn him and to sanctify him. Scott makes him a grandly imposing figure, Carlyle a sublime: Leslie Stephen drapes the stage in black for him: Fielding profoundly admires. But his first biographer, the Earl of Orrery, cavilled at nearly everything he had done; Johnson wrote his *Life* of him with icy restraint; Thackeray would not have cared to know him. The passer-by in literature dislikes his conceit, his truculence, his parasitism, his contempt for all that seemed heroics, his seemingly ungenerous treatment of the two women who loved him. Many of his biographers and editors, on the other hand, turn a blind eye on these, and paint him as Parson Adams without his eccentricities and the Happy Warrior without his innocence.

My second reason for attempting it is that Swift is a Sphinx across one's path. One must read his riddle.

He says that the curse of mankind is its affectation of a superiority that does not belong to it. Man pretends a grief greater than he feels when his friends die. He puts on airs of importance to his supposed inferiors which have no reason in his character or learning. He lays claim to know the arcana of the science of government when no such science exists and a little common-sense is all he possesses as a key to knowledge. He pretends to be able to explain everything in the heavens and on the earth and beneath the earth: actually he is the slave of a miserable body. He swells with importance at the thought that God regards him with concern; before the Judgement seat he will learn another lesson. If he is careful to avoid the sin of presumption and live a low creeping life close to the earth and common-sense, he still is wretched; for he has to fight against physical ailments all his life; he is faced with the prospect of body and mind weakening down to death, and he must watch in helpless anguish his dearest friends dying in agony. One has to come to terms with Swift, face this way of looking at things, and give some answer.

My third reason is that since Churton Collins published his *Jonathan Swift* in 1893 no full-length portrait of Swift's character and work has been drawn. Mr. Shane Leslie's fine imaginative study, *The Skull of Swift* (1928), deals chiefly with his life; and Doctor Emile Pons, in his masterly work on Swift, comes down no farther than *A Tale of a Tub*. In these forty years the great *Correspondence* of Swift, edited by F. Elrington Ball; the edition of the Prose Works by Temple Scott, and of the Poems by Mr. W. E. Browning; that model of scholarship, *A Tale of a Tub*, edited by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith; the deep-mining notes and articles of Sir Charles Firth; the minute learned researches of Mr. Harold Williams in his *Gulliver's*

Travels (1926) and *Swift's Library* (1932); and two or three other important works, have accumulated many new stones for that "whimsical and singular" building, which is Jonathan Swift. With this new material at my disposal I have attempted a new plan of the building. But I have not simply taken the stones that others have gathered. I have trenched over the whole field and based my study on a long independent examination of the early lives, contemporary pamphlets, sources and original editions. I have tried to strike out a number of new points of view and to give an appearance of newness to the "whimsical and singular" building.

I am nevertheless in the debt of these scholars and writers, and I acknowledge it gratefully. I have other acknowledgements to make. Messrs. G. Bell & Sons Ltd. permit me to use the texts of their editions of Swift, edited by Temple Scott and Mr. W. E. Browning; and of their *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, edited by F. Elrington Ball; and of my own *Select Letters of Swift*, in Bohn's Popular Library. Professor W. Macneile Dixon of the University of Glasgow read my manuscript in an early version; and this is the least of my debts to him. I have also to thank Professor A. A. Jack of the University of Aberdeen for lending and giving me many eighteenth-century books that bear on Swift, and for his counsel and encouragement. To ply the world further with an old beaten story of him, I have not countenance to do it.

CHAPTER I

Early Life

Much of what is known of Swift's early life comes to us from his own telling at a late period of his life when he was confirmed in misanthropy. There are, indeed, one or two early letters, and two or three facts have been discovered about his college days. But the chief sources of our knowledge of his early life are his *Fragment of Autobiography*,[1] which was written late, and the *Lives* of the Earl of Orrery,[2] Dr. Delany,[3] Deane Swift, his nephew,[4] and Sheridan,[5] the son of his bosom friend, all of whom made his acquaintance after he had passed his fiftieth year. One is not surprised, therefore, to find that it is a record of disappointment, rancour and kicking against the pricks. He constructed an ideal early life for a satirist. This does not mean that it is untrue. The contemporary letters—hard, cold letters—do not suggest another Swift. Yet he certainly did not pass all his early years nursing his rancour beneath a grey sky: there must have been long stretches when fancy made merry with the greatest mirth-maker of his time; and days such as those when he conceived *A Tale of a Tub*, on which a fierce joy was sunshine to him.

[1] *A Fragment of Autobiography.* Written about 1720. First printed in 1755 by Deane Swift. See Forster, p. 1, note.

[2] The Earl of Orrery's *Remarks*, 1752.

[3] Dr. Delany's *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks*, 1754.

[4] Deane Swift's *Essay*, 1755.

[5] Sheridan's *Life*, 1784.

I

Swift descended from a Yorkshire family of substance. The wayward gay lives of some of his ancestors foreshadowed his own. His great-grandfather, he tells us in the *Fragment of Autobiography*, was somewhat fantastic, for he took as his device "a dolphin (in these days called a Swift) twisted about an anchor with this motto, *Festina lente*." His grandfather, vicar of Goodrich, in Herefordshire, Swift proceeds, inherited this odd strain. He built a rambling house according to a plan that denoted him "to have been somewhat singular and very much of a projector." He was a Royalist and did good service for his cause in the Civil War. After the defeat of Naseby, for instance, he offered his waistcoat to the Earl of Raglan for the King's use—a strange gift, but three hundred gold pieces were quilted inside it. Thus he anticipated in action what his grandson was to do a thousand times by word: offer something reproachful or ridiculous, and turn it to a compliment.[1]

Swift was born at 7 Hoey's Court, Dublin, on the 30th of November 1667. His father, who had held the Stewardship of the King's Inns for a short period, had died seven months before. Five sons of the whimsical vicar of Goodrich had gone to Ireland to make their fortunes by the practice of law. Godwin, the eldest, succeeded best, and at one time was earning as much as £3000 a year. Jonathan, his younger brother,[2] though his only source of income was some small "employments and agencies," married Abigail Erick, a Leicestershire woman, whom he had probably met in the house of Sir John Temple,[3] father of Sir William Temple,

[1] "Essay on Conversation," *Works*, vol. xi. p. 71.
[2] The sixth of the vicar of Goodrich's sons.
[3] The Temples were a Leicestershire family.

and at that time Master of the Rolls in Ireland. A daughter was born to them, and then posthumously a son, THE Jonathan Swift. When that son reached middle age he wrote of his parents: "This marriage was on both sides very indiscreet; for his wife brought her husband little or no fortune, and his death happening so suddenly before he could make a sufficient establishment for his family, his son (not then born) hath often been heard to say that he felt the consequences of that marriage not only through the whole course of his education but during the greatest part of his life"—a sentence that, beneath apparent harshness, conceals some tender humour.

When one year old he was secretly carried off by his nurse to Whitehaven, Cumberland, where he was allowed to remain for two years. In the *Autobiography* he explains this incident by the necessity of his nurse visiting a sick relative and his mother's anxiety lest he should recross the sea before he had acquired sufficient strength; but in conversation he used it to suggest that he had been born in England: he was accustomed to say sardonically that he had been brought to Ireland in a bandbox. At the age of six he was sent to Kilkenny School, the best school in Ireland, by his Uncle Godwin, and there made a friendship with Congreve that lasted out their lives. (Swift hated mankind, but even so early, he had got into the habit of grappling his friends to him with hoops of steel.) In the same year his mother, who had now only £20 of an annuity to live on, removed to her native town of Leicester. She was a cheerful and agreeable woman, exact in the performance of her religious duties. She used to rise early, and by six o'clock, neatly dressed in the manteau and petticoat that good housewives then wore, had begun the tasks of the day. But her son was now to be

separated from her for sixteen years, and she can have had little influence on him.

In after life he never spoke of his Uncle Godwin without rancour. "He gave me," he said, "the education of a dog." In his *Fragment of Autobiography* with two pricks of his needle he poisons his name: "He was an ill pleader, but perhaps a little too dextrous in the subtle parts of the law." The reason for his rancour was not any real wrong his uncle had done him but his own morose temper. He had a grudge against the world as soon as he entered it. Many years later he wrote to Lord Bolingbroke: "I remember, when I was a little boy, I felt a great fish at the end of my line which I drew up almost on the ground, but it dropped in, and the disappointment vexes me to this very day, and I believe it was the type of all my future disappointments."[1]

In his fourteenth year he entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a pensioner. In his first four years of study he neglected theology and philosophy for history and poetry; he could not understand logic, physics, metaphysics, natural philosophy, mathematics or anything of that kind; he hated Stierius and Smiglesius and devoted himself to cards and poetry.[2] In consequence, he was admitted to his degree of Bachelor of Arts only *speciali gratia*, which means that he was allowed to proceed to the disputation for which the degree was granted because of his excellence in some subjects and in spite of his weakness in those he disliked. Swift himself said that he was admitted to the degree in a manner little to his credit because of " dullness and insufficiency." The direct opposite is true; the authorities of Trinity College waived the usual regulations in order to recognize

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 77.
[2] Deane Swift's *Essay*, p. 42, note.

merit. But merely to question the excellence of Swift roused undying anger; throughout his life he missed no opportunity of repeating: Behold in me the dullness and insufficiency that Trinity College condemned! He remained in the University three years longer; yet though he read assiduously, his general behaviour displeased the authorities. He was under censure nearly the whole time for town-haunting and for not attending chapels and roll-calls, and he was reproved for insolence to the junior dean and for exciting dissension within the walls of the College.[1]

Any one acquainted with the life of colleges will make light of those penalties and disgraces. Every undergraduate kicks against the trifling rules and regulations with which the older English Universities and Colleges, unlike the Universities of the Continent, keep their students in pupilage. But Swift looked back on his contests with deans and proctors not as a game honestly played on either side. Scott cites Johnson's explanation of his gay and frolicsome behaviour at Oxford as an explanation of Swift's also: "Ah, sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority." But Johnson did not look back on his college life with ill-will.

There were, however, some oases in the desert of his college life. One day when his pockers were empty, a sailor entered his room and gave him a bag of silver coins from his cousin, Willoughby Swift, a merchant in Lisbon. Swift desired the sailor to take some of them for his trouble. "But," says Deane Swift, who first tells the story, "the sailor would not touch a farthing. 'No, no, master,' said he, 'Ize take nothing for my

[1] Barrett, p. 11.

trouble, I would do more than that comes to for Mr. Willoughby Swift.' Whereupon Jonathan gathered up the money as fast as he could, and thrust it into his pocket; for by the Lord Harry, said he, I was afraid if the money had lain much longer upon the table he might have repented his generosity and taken a good part of it."

Swift, from the tone of the story, was deeply grateful to his cousin: he should have been far more grateful to the uncle who had looked after him from birth and educated him as if he had been his own son. But though he often blamed the sin of ingratitude in others, it lay lightly on his own conscience. A few years later he went to the University of Oxford with a *testimonium* from Trinity College in his pocket, in which there was no mention of how the Irish degree had been won; and on the strength of it he became in a few weeks a graduate of the University of Oxford. "I had all the civilities I could wish for," he wrote, "and so many favours that I am ashamed to have been more obliged in a few weeks to strangers than ever I was in seven years to Dublin College." It is strange that nowhere in his satires is there any mention of that obliquity of the human mind by which a slight favour or a trifling gift blots out the memory of years of devotion.

Swift says that the treatment of his relatives caused him to become so discouraged and sunk in spirits that he neglected part of his academic studies. This was unfair to his uncle. He had invested and lost much of his fortune in a project to make the working of iron in Co. Cavan a Peruvian treasure. By 1686, too, he had fallen into a lethargy. His nephew was the first to suffer, for he had been married four times and had fifteen sons and three daughters to provide for. It is intelligible that Swift in his youth should not have

realized the fairness of his conduct, but that he should have persisted in shutting his eyes to it is another matter.

2

At the beginning of 1689 the outbreak of the Revolution made Ireland a storm centre, and Swift went to live with his mother at Leicester. After a few months there, he received an appointment as a kind of secretary-valet to Sir William Temple, son of that Sir John Temple, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, who had known his father. Except for two intervals—one of about eighteen months[1] when on medical advice he tried what Irish air would do for a giddiness and coldness of stomach that "had almost brought him to the grave," and the other from 1694 to 1696 when he held the Prebend of Kilroot on the shores of Belfast Lough—he remained with him till his death in 1699.

Sir William Temple was sixty-one years of age when Swift became a member of his household at Moor Park,[2] near Farnham, in Surrey. For negotiating the Triple Alliance and making the Treaty of Breda and arranging the marriage between Princess Mary and the Prince of Orange, he had won European fame. Since the last of these events he had taken little share in political life. More than once Charles II. begged him to become a Secretary of State, but he steadily refused. It is said that in the five years between 1683 and 1688 he did not once leave Sheen for London. He did not declare for William till James had fled—yet he still remained the great Sir William Temple.

Swift owed a great deal to his stay at Moor Park.

[1] From August 1690 to Christmas 1691. *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 3, note.

[2] He had bought Moor Park in 1686. He occasionally resided at Sheen, near Richmond, till 1689. Craik, vol. i. p. 29.

As his Letters and Diaries show, he read and wrote much: it was at Moor Park, according to Johnson, that he read the classics eight hours each day in order to fill the gaps in his education, and ran up a hill every two hours to keep his mind fresh. In these ten years his genius was gathering nourishment and strength.

The supreme importance of the stay at Moor Park was that it brought him daily over a long period into the company of Sir William Temple. Swift differed from him so radically in mind and temper that one would not be surprised to find that Temple influenced him through the operation of antipathies, not through sympathy. And this is just what happened in some departments of life. "Faith, he spoiled a fine gentleman," Swift wrote many years later: he made it impossible for him ever again to fiddle to a great man's whims. Sir William Temple is said by his sister, Lady Giffard, to have been on easy and pleasant terms with his servants. But one gets the impression that his ease was assumed and that he could not unbend without condescension. Then, too, he suffered from gout and rheumatism and rheums of the eyes and teeth, and in consequence was subject to " damps." Living with him, Swift was often chagrined. He wrote at Moor Park *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub* in which his genius took a freer and bolder flight than ever after. But in these books, for all their iridescence of gaiety, his hand is against every man. They are what one would expect from a great witty genius who had a devil in him that had to be exorcised by some kind of entertainment or another.

Yet Swift got food for his intellect at Moor Park. There was laid the train on which his mind was to explode. Many of the ideas on science and literature and

the conduct of public affairs that he urged with so much fierceness and violence in *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Tale of a Tub*, are to be found in embryo in the Essays and Memoirs he transcribed and edited for the master of Moor Park.

The kernel of *A Tale of a Tub*, for instance, is a passage in Temple's *Of Ancient and Modern Learning*, where he says that the chief reason for the slow advancement of learning in modern times has been the disputes about the authority of Popes and Councils, of ecclesiastical and civil power, of scripture and tradition. "The endless disputes and litigious quarrels upon all these subjects, favoured and encouraged by the interests of the several Princes engaged in them, either took up wholly, or generally employed the thoughts, the studies, the applications, the endeavours of all or most of the finest wits, the deepest scholars, and the most learned writers that the age produced . . . To these disputes of the pen, succeeded those of the sword; and the ambition of great Princes and Ministers, mingled with the zeal, or covered with the pretences of religion, has for a hundred years past infested Christendom with almost a perpetual course, or succession, either of civil or of foreign wars."[1]

The ideas in the "Ode to Sir William Temple" (1692),[2] were doubtless worked out in conversation with Sir William himself; and they are the staple of Swift's satire to the end of his life. In Section 3 he attacks the blockheads who confine learning to colleges and schools, and look for their treasures in "that deep grave, a book"; and before Wotton and Bentley had written a word, he scoffs at pedantry and ill-manners:

[1] *Works*, 1757, vol. iii. pp. 465–66.
[2] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 11.

They purchase knowledge at th' expense
Of common breeding, common sense,
And grow at once scholars and fools;
Affect ill-mannered pedantry,
Rudeness, ill-nature, incivility.

A score of years before he condemned those ministers who make a mystery of their petty intrigues and call them politics and the arcana of state, he had condemned them under the instruction of Sir William Temple.

The wily shifts of state, those jugglers' tricks,
Which we call deep designs and politics,
(As in a theatre the ignorant fry,
Because the cords escape their eye,
Wonder to see the motions fly),
Methinks, when you expose the scene,
Down the ill-organ'd engines fall;
Off fly the vizards, and discover all:
How plain I see through the deceit!
How shallow, and how gross, the cheat!
Look where the pulley's tied above!
Great God! (said I) what have I seen!
On what poor engines move
The thoughts of monarchs and designs of states!

A view of history often expressed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is that great national and political changes are not due to the well-planned or deep-laid designs of statesmen but to trivial or even ridiculous causes. "Toute l'Asie," wrote Montaigne, "se perdit et se consomma en guerres pour les maquerellages de Paris." Had the nose of Cleopatra been shorter, wrote Pascal, the whole face of the world would have been different. Temple, probably with both Pascal and Montaigne in his mind, said that the disease of gout in the great toe of an admiral or general had, within his experience, been the cause of several calamities. "Within these fifteen years past, I have known a great fleet disabled for two months and thereby lose great

occasions, by an indisposition of the Admiral, while he was neither well enough to exercise, nor ill enough to leave the command. I have known two towns of the greatest consequence, lost, contrary to all forms, by the Governor's falling ill in the time of the sieges."[1] This idea runs through all Swift's satire of political life. In Lilliput candidates for great office proved their ability by dancing on a rope or jumping over a stick. When Gulliver in Glubbdubdrib called up the ghosts of those who had played a part in modern history, he "discovered the true causes of many great events that have surprised the world, how a whore can govern the back-stairs, the back-stairs a council, and the council a state."

During Swift's first year or two at Moor Park, Temple treated him as a young man knowing some Latin and Greek and a little French and writing a good and current hand, fit to fill the position of a valet or clerk. The picture so often drawn at the time of the young clergyman in the house of a lord gives an idea of his position :

> Little the unexperienc'd wretch does know,
> What slavery he oft must undergo;
> Who tho' in silken Scarf and Cassock drest,
> Wears but a gayer Livery at best;
> When Dinner calls, the Implement must wait,
> With Holy-Words, to consecrate the Meat:
> But hold it for a Favour seldom known,
> If he be deign'd the Honour to sit down.
> Soon as the Tarts appear, Sir Crape, withdraw!
> Those dainties are not for a Spiritual Maw:
> Observe your Distance, and be sure to stand
> Hard by the Cistern, with your Cap in Hand:
> There for Diversion, you may pick your Teeth,
> Till the kind Voider comes for your Relief:
> For meer Board-Wages, such their Freedom sell
> Slaves to an Hour, and Vassals to a Bell:

[1] Temple's *Works*, 1757, vol. iii. p. 241.

And if th' Enjoyment of one Day be stole,
They are but Pris'ners, out upon Parole:
Always the Marks of Slavery remain,
And they, tho' loose, still drag about their Chain.
And where's the mighty Prospect, after all,
A Chaplainship serv'd up, and seven Years Thrall?
The menial Thing, perhaps, for a Reward
Is to some slender Benefice preferred,
With this Proviso bound, that he must wed
My Lady's Antiquated-Waiting-Maid,
In Dressing only skill'd, and Marmelade.[1]

However low was Swift's position when he first went to Moor Park, it very soon improved. In 1692 he received the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Oxford. The year following Temple showed how great was the confidence he placed in him by sending him to King William to advise him that the Bill for Triennial Parliaments should not be allowed to pass. When Swift a few months later, desiring a "settled way of life," and restless because nothing was being done to help him to it, left Moor Park and went to Kilroot in the North of Ireland, Temple was "extreme angry." "He was extreme angry I left him, and yet would not oblige himself any further than upon my good behaviour, nor would promise anything firmly to me at all; so that everybody judged I did best to leave him."[2] A year later he returned at Temple's request. This is very remarkable. Sir William Temple was now sixty-five years of age and still so renowned a diplomat that foreigners coming to England visited him as one of the most important men in the country. Swift was twenty-seven, a young man who had given no proof to the world of his talents. Age seldom shows so much insight into the powers of youth.

[1] "A Satire Address'd to a Friend that is About to Leave the University," Oldham's *Works*, 1721, vol. ii. p. 126.

[2] *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 12.

3

One can see how hard Swift was in temper from his conduct in his love-affairs of these early years. Yet, if he is merciless, he is clear-sighted: he has perfect understanding of himself and a power of coldly discerning the affectations of others.

While visiting Leicester for a few weeks, in 1691, he passed the time by making love to a certain Betty Jones. His mother, who was distantly related to her, did all she could to break off the affair. She got him off to London as soon as possible; and she asked her brother-in-law, a clergyman, to point out to him the folly of a marriage with Betty Jones. Swift replied sardonically that he had only been amusing himself, that he had no intention of marrying till he had settled his fortune. He would not ruin himself for a maggot. He was not a raw and ignorant scholar who believed that there was an angel within every silk petticoat; nor yet one of those honest young men who interpret too literally the command to marry rather than to burn. Besides, his cold temper and unconfined humour would keep him from such a folly. He had behaved to twenty women as he had behaved to the "woman in hand."[1] We hear no more of Betty Jones for nearly forty years. She married one Perkins, inn-keeper of the George Inn at Loughborough; and in 1728 a woman called Anne Giles, who claimed to be her daughter, turned up in Dublin, and asked him to lend her three guineas. Swift, for old times' sake, told his agent to give her a present of five pounds if she could prove her story.

The affair with Jane Waring—Varina, as he called her—affected him more deeply. She was the daughter

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 4.

of the Archdeacon of Dromore and sister of a friend to whom he is said by a false tradition to have shown a copy of *A Tale of a Tub* while still at College. Swift had become acquainted with her after he had been appointed to the prebend of Kilroot at the beginning of 1695. He urges her in a letter to marry him or to give him her word that she will become his wife. He thinks that she really loves him, and that it is only some fine lady affectations and fear lest his fortune be not great enough that holds her back. He asks her not to let these weigh for a moment against the unspeakable happiness that will come to both if she consents. "Surely, Varina, you have but a very mean opinion of the joys that accompany a true, honourable, unlimited love; yet either nature and our ancestors have hugely deceived us, or else all other sublunary things are dross in comparison. Is it possible you cannot be yet insensible to the prospect of a rapture and delight so innocent and so exalted? Trust me, Varina, Heaven has given us nothing else worth the loss of a thought. Ambition, high appearance, friends, and fortune are all tasteless and insipid when they come in competition; yet millions of such glorious minutes we are perpetually losing, for ever losing, irrecoverably losing, to gratify empty forms and wrong notions, and affected coldnesses and peevish humour. These are the unhappy encumbrances which we who are distinguished from the vulgar do fondly create to torment ourselves. The only felicity permitted to human life we clog with tedious circumstances and barbarous formality."[1]

A few weeks after writing this letter Swift did go to England. He had offered to give up his "great acquaintance" there for her sake and pursue his advantage in Ireland "with all the eagerness and courage imaginable."

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 19.

Since she still resisted, there was nothing to hold him back.

But his departure was not the end of their relationship: "abundance of letters" passed between them in the next few years. She gave as a reason for her refusal that the doctors had told her that she would hazard her life by marrying. Swift urged her to leave her home, that "sink," bad both for her body and her mind: she replied "imperiously." Swift made inquiries as to her fortune with the intention of discovering whether their united incomes would support a household: she set this down to mercenary motives. She taunted him with having a new mistress, to which he answered that he had never had thoughts of marriage with any but her.

The thing came to a head about four years afterwards, on Swift's return to Ireland in the summer of 1699. Varina had now put aside her whims and affectations. She pressed him to declare his intentions towards her, and though reproaching him, made it clear that she wished to be his wife. Swift's uncle—Adam, a friend of the Warings—pointed out to him that by leaving the lady in doubt he was hindering her chances with other suitors. But five years had passed. Swift was no longer promising happiness to himself by marriage with her. He wrote to her on May 4, 1700, going over the whole course of their love, and said that he was ready to marry her on certain conditions. These were so terrifying that we hear no more of Varina. "I desire, therefore, you will let me know if your health be otherwise than it was when you told me the doctors advised you against marriage as what would certainly hazard your life. Are they or you grown of another opinion in this particular? Are you in a condition to manage domestic affairs, with an income of less perhaps than three hundred pounds a year? Have you such an inclination to my person and

humour as to comply with my desires and way of living, and endeavour to make us both as happy as you can? Will you be ready to engage in those methods I shall direct for the improvement of your mind, so as to make us entertaining company for each other, without being miserable when we are neither visiting nor visited? Can you bend your love and esteem and indifference to others the same way as I do mine? Shall I have so much power in your heart, or you so much government of your passions, as to grow in good humour upon my approach, though provoked by a—— ? Have you so much good nature as to endeavour by soft words to smooth any rugged humour occasioned by the cross accidents of life? Shall the place wherever your husband is thrown be more welcome than courts or cities without him?"

There exist only two letters from Swift to Varina, and none from Varina to Swift: yet it is quite clear that he was right to break with her; there was no love between them after the first year when she played the affected fine lady to him sighing at her feet. He need not have trampled on the past so cruelly or severed the relationship with so harsh an ultimatum. But in Swift there was an appalling egoism, a fierce determination to be right at all costs. In each of his three love affairs he treated a woman whom he had encouraged to give him her love with a refinement of cruelty. This is that one of them where his conduct is most excusable, for no deep affection was involved on either side. There was all the more reason, therefore, why he should have broken off the match in decent and moderate terms. Fear made him callous and ruthless, fear lest the course he had set out for himself should be interrupted. He was ready to blast with a word or look man or woman who infringed the sacred circle of his life. This fear operated, too, in the affairs with Vanessa and Stella; but we have more

pity with him in them; for we feel that he is torn by agony at the thought of the suffering he has caused; and feel also that his fear for himself and the issues of his own life has become allied with a sense of the hopelessness and desolation of life in general.

4

In 1699, the year of Sir William Temple's death, Swift set down a number of resolutions to be kept when he became old. In them he looks at old age in a cold, judging humour. Neither religion nor poetry nor affection throw their light on it. He sees it as a woman, whose lover has left her, sees her waning beauty. He finds it to be garrulous, peevish, morose, opinionative, boastful, not too cleanly, convinced of its own excellence. Some of the resolutions are:

Not to marry a young woman.
Not to keep young company unless they desire it.
Not to be peevish or morose or suspicious.
Not to scorn present ways, or wits, or fashions, or men, or war, etc.
Not to be fond of children or let them come near me hardly.[1]
Not to tell the same story over and over to the same people.
Not to be covetous.
Not to neglect decency of cleanliness, for fear of falling into nastiness.

In these and the other nine resolutions is the first sketch of the Struldbrugs. The picture in them is true enough. But they show a distrust of life. Old age, say some poets, is as natural as youth and has its own beauty; to hedge it about with restraints is to be morbidly

[1] *Or let them come near me hardly* is crossed out: not by Swift, according to Forster. *Life*, p. 103.

afraid of it; the agencies of nature, if they are allowed their play, will bring it to perfection. Swift distrusts nature. In his attitude to it he is reserved and full of fear. God, he says in another place, may not have intended life as a blessing to men.

Everywhere one turns in Swift's early life one finds proof of his hard, soured, grudging temper. Yet there is sufficient evidence later that there was another side to it. In London in 1710 he became interested in a young poet, "little Harrison." He counselled him against aping the foolish expenditure of the "fine fellows," puffed his poems, and got him a position as secretary to the Ambassador Extraordinary at the Hague. But Harrison, though he had been promised a salary of £1000 a year, had not received a farthing of it when he returned to London at the beginning of 1713. Swift extorted £100 from the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Oxford. But meantime little Harrison had fallen ill of inflammation of the lungs. Swift writes to Stella on February 14: "I took Parnell this morning, and we walked to see poor Harrison. I had the hundred pounds in my pocket. I told Parnell I was afraid to knock at the door; my mind misgave me! I knocked, and his man in tears told me his master was dead an hour before. Think what grief this is to me! I went to his mother, and have been ordering things for his funeral with as little cost as possible, to-morrow at ten at night. Lord Treasurer was much concerned when I told him. I could not dine with Lord Treasurer, nor anywhere else; but got a bit of meat towards evening. No loss ever grieved me so much: poor creature! Pray God Almighty bless poor MD. Adieu. I send this away to-night, and am sorry it must go while I am in so much grief."

Are there no signs at all of other affections in his earlier years? Leaving out the first flame of love for

Varina, only one—his friendship for Hester Johnson, which unrolls its leaves and little blossoms amidst the hardness of his nature like aconite in a winter garden.

When Swift first became acquainted with her she was a young girl of eight years of age. She had been baptized as the daughter of Edward Johnson, who was steward of Temple's estate at Sheen. But some mystery surrounds her birth. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1757 says that she was the child of Sir William Temple, and though he makes some obvious blunders in his statement, it is difficult not to believe him. No other explanation has been offered for Sir William Temple having left her by his will property worth £1000.

Swift taught her to write and guided her reading; and about her twelfth year began that long, close, tender friendship which lasted without interruption till her death. One gets only two or three glimpses into these early years. "Uth, uth, uth," he writes to her in the Journal in 1711. "It is a starving cold morning, and I am saying uth, uth, uth, uth, uth. Doesn't Stella remember how I used to come into her chamber and turn Stella out of her chair and rake up the fire on a cold morning and cry uth, uth, uth, uth?" And in another place he reminds her how before certain card games Sir William Temple used to deal out twelvepence to them. He writes to her when she is on a visit to London: "I received your kind letter from Robert by word of mouth, and think it a vast condescension in you to think of us in all your greatness. Now we shall hear nothing from you for five months but 'we courtiers.' Loory[1] is well, and presents his humble duty to my Lady, and love to his fellow-servant; but he is the miserablest creature in the world, eternally in his melancholy note, whatever I can

[1] A bird of paradise.

do, and if his finger does but ache, I am in such a fright you would wonder at it. . . . Mr. Mose and I desire you will remember our love to the King, and let us know how he looks. Robert says the Czar is here, and is fallen in love with you, and designs to carry you to Muscovy; pray provide yourself with muffs and sable tippets, etc."[1]

The man of thirty and the good-looking girl of seventeen formed a little secret community in the great house.

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 21.

CHAPTER III

A Tale of a Tub

A Tale of a Tub was published in 1704, but like the *Battle of the Books*, which appeared in the same volume, it had been written some years before. In the book itself the author gave several indications of the date of its composition. In the Preface he tells us he has calculated his wit for the taste of August 1697: the Bookseller in the *Bookseller to the Reader* says that he has now had the work by him from 1698: and Swift in the anonymous *Apology* added in the edition of 1710, declares that he wrote the greater part of the work in 1696. Probably Swift worked hardest at it round about that date, but he may have had it in his head some years before, and he made several additions to it later.

Why did Swift delay its publication? He was afraid of its effect on his career. He had written it while still a young man and much in the world,[1] and had addressed it to men about town, who were accustomed to great liberty of speech. But when he began to look forward to eminence in the Church, he hesitated about printing it. His fears were justified. He never dared to acknowledge it: again and again it came between him and promotion. On its publication it raised so great a storm that he thought it better to remain in Ireland for two or three years.

The title contains a nest of meanings. It would

[1] *A Tale of a Tub. Apology* (added in 1710).

suggest to an eighteenth-century reader the usual meaning of the phrase—an idle story. "Here's a Tale of a Tub," cried Lord Jeffreys when in his first important case John Somers (later Lord Somers) challenged the composition of the jury.[1] He would also remember that a "tub" was a slang name for a pulpit.

> The Tub-Preaching Saint was so furious a Blade,
> In Jack-boots both Day and Night, preacht, slept, and pray'd.[2]

Swift adds yet another meaning, connecting it with a trick by which in some early geographical works sailors were said to be able to elude destruction by a whale—their throwing out to him a tub in order that while he diverted himself with it they might make good their escape. The ship is the state; the whale, Hobbes's *Leviathan* which tosses and plays with all schemes of Religion and Government, or rather it is those unquiet spirits who draw their shafts from it. An academy is to be established which will erect real defences against those dangerous critics of the Commonwealth. In the meantime, here is his Tub.'

'So *A Tale of a Tub* pretends to be a piece of wild fooling, a rotten empty tub tossed about on the waves of controversy to divert the sporting wits. And no tub ever danced so lightly or so high. It was really, of course, a torpedo, and it shattered the timbers of Religion and Government—that is, false religion and bad government, quackery and sham enthusiasm and presumption—more effectually than all the dangerous critics of three ages multiplied by nine and seven could have done.'

One stroke that distinguishes it from all other such works, and makes it *insigne, recens, indictum ore alio*, is that its author is a tenant of Grub Street, a Grubæan

[1] *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, Campbell, vol. iv. p. 85.
[2] *State Poems*, 1703, vol. ii. p. 262.

Sage, Etc. the Younger, or Etc. the Elder. His usual occupation is writing Sixpenny Worths of Wit, Westminster Drolleries, Delightful Tales, Compleat Jesters, and he has been so successful with these that he has triumphed over Time, clipped his wings, blunted his scythe, and drawn the hobnails from his boots. So great has been his success that in their anxiety to equal him many Fellows of the Royal Society and many of the grandees of letters, who used to frequent Will's Coffee-house, have shifted their lodgings to Grub Street. "I have recollected," he says, "that the shrewdest pieces of this treatise were conceived in bed in a garret; at other times (for a reason best known to myself) I thought fit to sharpen my invention with hunger: and in general, the whole work was begun, continued, and ended, under a long course of physic, and a great want of money."

'Swift himself thought very highly of *A Tale of a Tub*. In his old age he was heard muttering to himself: "Good God! What a genius I had when I wrote that book." And in 1710 in the *Apology* he said, evidently in all seriousness, that it was "calculated to live, at least as long as our language and taste admit no great alterations." Dr. Johnson suggested to Boswell that it was not Swift's work: he doubted whether he had it in him to write a book so rich in ideas; but this was really a tribute to its greatness. Yet it is not much read. If one questioned a hundred people accustomed to read widely as to their knowledge of it, it would be found that a much smaller number know it well than those who know well *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Spectator*, De Foe's Novels, *The Lives of the Poets*.'

'There are various reasons for this. In spite of the grave protest in the *Apology* that it contains only a few things that need to be excused, it is a scurrilous

piece of work. To use his own image, he unravels the meaning of religion, as one does an old stocking, that is, by beginning at the foot. He tells the story of Christianity as if it were a tavern brawl; and reduces religion and philosophy to affections of the bowels and the "flesh." He scribbles his nastiness over all the magnificent enthusiasms and fine endeavours of mankind. No wonder that many people still look on the book with aversion.

Then the Sage of Grub Street sets us riddles in it, sometimes insoluble riddles, and takes a malicious pleasure in our vain efforts to find answers for them. *A Tale of a Tub* is in places a nut which costs us a tooth, and repays us with nothing but a worm. "The ignorant reader of it," says the author, "will find himself disposed to stare. The reader truly learned, for whose benefit he wakes when others sleep, and sleeps when others wake, will find in it sufficient matter to employ his speculations to the end of his life." So that its mysteries may be made clear, he humbly proposes that every prince in Christendom will take seven of the deepest scholars in his dominions, and shut them up close for seven years in seven chambers, with a command to write seven ample commentaries on it.

Another reason why it is little read is that the satire is often delivered through the medium of religious controversies and kinds of learning that no longer excite us. Unless one has heard something of the Prefaces of Dryden where he speaks at length of his sufferings, and of the claims of Descartes to have set philosophy on a sure foundation, and of the intricate dark writings of the mystic Thomas Vaughan, and of the arguments with which by reference to "lost authors" Bentley proved the *Epistles of Phalaris* to be an imposture, the immense architecture of wit in *A Tale of a Tub* will be

as dead as a cardboard mountain in a stage property room.

A discussion of *A Tale of a Tub* divides itself into three parts: the attack on the Churches; the attack on the critics; the attack on human reason.

I

There has been much dispute as to where Swift got the story of Peter, Martin and Jack, but though there are several stories that resemble it, of no one of them can it be said: Here Swift has borrowed. He was entitled to boast, as he often did, that he had never stolen a hint. A Will or Testament handed down to children was the common property of allegory in a century where the sermons teem with allegories and parables. Swift may have had the names Peter, Martin and Jack suggested to him, though he needed no heaven-sent genius to invent them. What gave life to the allegory, was the legacy of the three coats all of the same cut, texture and colour; for that would at once bring to the mind of the seventeenth-century reader Jacob's gift to his favourite son; and so communicate a poetic atmosphere to the story comparable to that communicated to *The Pilgrim's Progress* by the continual reminder that the way along which Christian walked was the Way of the New Testament.

The allegory was pat to the situation, and its treatment is masterly, vigorous, full of comedy, and unflagging to the last detail. The metaphor that is at the heart of an allegory should have enough strength and blood in it to send the blood coursing to the remotest veins. Only *The Pilgrim's Progress* besides *A Tale of a Tub* satisfies this in English.

There has also been dispute about the meaning of the allegory. Swift himself gave an explanation of it in the *Apology*: "Why should any clergyman of our

Church be angry to see the follies and fanaticism of superstition exposed, though in the most ridiculous manner; since that is perhaps the most probable way to cure them, or at least to hinder them from further spreading? Besides, though it was not intended for their perusal, it rallies nothing but what they preach against. It contains nothing to provoke them by the least scurrility upon their persons or their functions. It celebrates the Church of England as the most perfect of all others, in discipline and doctrine; it advances no opinion they reject, nor condemns any they receive."

Some of Swift's biographers take these sentences at their face value. Sheridan, for instance, says that Swift published *A Tale of a Tub* in 1704 because he saw that in that year the Church was declining in men's opinion. "The beauty of the Church of England," he says, "by a plain and well-conducted allegory, adapted to all capacities, was shown in the most obvious light, by the characters of simplicity and moderation, which are the true marks of Christianity, in opposition to the pageantry, superstition and tyranny of the Church of Rome, on the one hand; and the spleen, hypocrisy and enthusiasm of Calvinism on the other." [1] But this gives no explanation of many things in the book. While the three brothers were still of one mind, Martin as well as Peter and Jack drank, and fought, and whored, and slept, and swore. Martin as well as Peter and Jack accepted the philosophy of clothes and believed that religion was a cloak, honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt; self-love a surtout; vanity a shirt; and conscience a pair of breeches. Had Swift only aimed at the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian, would he not have confined himself to their peculiar abuses? Three oratorial machines are described in the Introduction, the stage itinerant, the

[1] Sheridan's *Life*, 1781, p. 43.

scaffold, whose ascending orators have much enlarged the treasury of British eloquence, and chief of the three, the pulpit—which was not very flattering to the great pulpit orators of the Church of England, Sharp, Tillotson, South. Nor is the picture of Martin phlegmatically picking the threads from his coat a compliment to him.

The satire in the story of Peter, Martin and Jack cuts deeper than Sheridan and his many followers in this criticism, thought. Swift says only one true thing about it in the *Apology* he added in 1710, that his book attacks the follies and superstitions of his age. Now one great human folly had been branded on the mind of the seventeenth century by a succession of writers—the folly of wars and schisms over questions not essential to the Christian faith. John Hales of Eton in his *Tract on Schism*, written on the eve of the Civil War, said that schisms were generally caused by bishops, who, forgetting Christ's law of love and humility, set up a heraldry of *secundum, sub et supra*; or by trivial disputes such as that about the keeping of Easter and the time of keeping it; or by the fancies of particular men being imposed on the liturgies and doctrines of the Church under the pretence that they were authorized by tradition. John Locke in his *Letter on Toleration* ascribes the divisions in the Church and the attempts to cement them by blood and the sword, to avarice and the insatiable desire of dominion and to frivolous disputes as to whether one's hair is of the right cut, or whether one has been dipped in the right fashion, or whether one follows a guide clothed in white and wearing a mitre. Sir William Temple had written in the same strain.[1]

It was with such passages in mind that Swift wrote the story of Peter, Martin and Jack. He attacks the frivolousness and triviality of the innovations that had

[1] Temple's *Works*, vol. iii. p. 466, *supra*, p. 15.

been made on Church doctrines and ceremonies just as Hales of Eton, Locke and Temple had done; and like them he lashes the avarice and ambition of the prelates who had taken advantage of them for their own selfish or cruel ends. It is unnecessary to ask whether this attitude can be justified by history. It had been forced on the seventeenth century by the wars that had been waged by religious zealots for two hundred years; it was to be the attitude of the mass of educated men for the next hundred years.'

'Yet though Swift follows the common track of enlightened opinion, he speaks in his own tone. Others gave mild counsel, or sternly reproved, or were seriously indignant; he wrote *A Tale of a Tub*. Hales of Eton while censuring innovations of fancy in worship and doctrine, was willing that they should remain, so long as they were not made a cause of schism; the central idea of Locke's *Letters on Toleration* is that men may form associations to worship as they please, so long as they do not compel others to join them; Temple, with his veneration for the past and human interest in its manifestations, must have had some feeling for the ritual of the Church: what he condemned was the waste of intellect and the shedding of blood in religious disputes. Swift mocks and jeers. For him, as Wotton says, the history of the Church is "a farce and all a ladle." The absurdities of the Confessional, Transubstantiation and Predestination provoke in him sardonic glee. With bitter joy he drives his hard, scornful words into the heart of things sacred to the Christian mind. Voltaire was right when he said that Swift had cast more sarcasms against the Christian religion than Molière against the doctors.' —

It may seem strange that the man who was to become the champion of the Churches of England and Ireland

was, in his twenty-eighth year, a mocker of Christianity. Yet, I think, Voltaire was right. When Swift wrote *A Tale of a Tub* he had not yet allied his ambition to the Church: though in clerical orders he expected advancement through Sir William Temple and his Whig friends, and he thought that his future lay in politics and literature. He tells us himself that he wrote it while he was still in the world, and the fashionable humour of that world was to make a mock of everything pertaining to religion. Young gallants, says a writer of the time, make it their pastime as much as cockfighting, to set a Doctor of a Parish and a Quaker or Independent by the ears. Endow a young gallant with Swift's breadth of mind and Swift's hardness and Swift's contemptuous mind, and you have the author of *A Tale of a Tub*.

Though the great underlying motif of the story of Peter, Martin and Jack was ridicule of the quarrels and divisions in the Church over matters of trivial importance, he used it also to vent his spleen against Roman Catholicism and Presbyterianism—especially the latter: he liked to knock down as many ninepins as possible.

He hated Presbyterianism. One would have thought that by 1700 and after all that had taken place since 1660, he would have forgotten its arrogance and persecution during the Civil War; but he held that the brand of Cain was on it, which descends like the Roman nose and the Austrian lip. Hatred of them was in his blood, for his grandfather had suffered from their spoliations; it had been continually fed by the works of the author he knew by heart, Samuel Butler; and heightened to fury by his contact with them as a parish clergyman. He kept an armoury of slanders against them ready for use at all times: that they counted themselves above morality, that they were prepared again to set up a republic, that they were the allies of the atheist and the Hell-Fire

Club. To propagate their wild and wicked blasphemies they had made their country a field of blood. They had broken down tombs and monuments of men famous in their generation, and made houses of prayer dens of thieves and stables for cattle. By Presbyterians he meant generally the whole body of dissenters and included scornfully among them Deists, Socinians, Quakers, Muggletonians, Fanatics, Brownists. But he has always a special curse for the Presbyterian *true blew*. In answer to the claim that some of them had declared openly against the King's murder, he says: "As to what is alleged that some of the Presbyterians declared openly against the King's murder, I allow it to be true. But from what motives? No other can possibly be assigned, than perfect spite, rage and envy to find themselves wormed out of all power by a new infant spawn of Independents sprung from their own bowels."[1]

All the traits of Presbyterianism that Swift attacks with tooth and claw in *A Tale of a Tub* had been satirized in scores of books and pamphlets between 1660 and 1696: their grave demeanour, their "antick dress," their turning up the whites of their eyes, their nonsensical prayers, their ranting sermons, their appeals to Providence in the most trifling matters, their insinuating ways with women. There is no better way of realizing the sting and virulence of Swift's satire than by placing it side by side with one or two passages from these works. Here is a typical account of a dissenting minister in the pulpit: "Having fitted the Cushion to the most commodious posture for the Ease of his Elbows; pull'd out his Handkercher, with which he intends to wipe off the sweat, given the Uncanonical Cloak a twitch or two; or if the weather be hot, laid it aside, that he may not appear Lazy by thrashing in his Cloak; and which is a

[1] The Presbyterians' Plea of Merit, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 35.

sure sign that he is beginning to begin, having roll'd his eyes about, as if he were falling into a Trance, he gently recovers himself into his Prayer, which he faintly begins with a low voice, and languishing Tone; a soft and deliberate utterance; which as the Holy Fire of his Zeal comes gradually by Motion to gather Heat, advances still higher and higher; till, at length, being thoroughly warm, like a Pot with too much Fire under it, the scum of his brains boils over; and he tumbles out his Expressions with that Ardor and Precipitation, that every Word treads upon the Heels of another and pushes it forward: nor does it import whether the Expressions be Congruous, or, it may be Decent, so long as they are but passionate and vehement; and at every third or fourth Sentence (to help the Pump), as loud as he is able, an importunate Lord! Lord! at which the People are strangely melted, some into Tears, some into Sighs and Groans; which are the spiritual Hums and Plaudites of a Conventicle; and signify that the Man comes off very well, in acting his Part upon that Religious Theater."[1]

Swift's counterpart to this is the jeering wit of the description of Jack's tongue, which was so musculous and subtile that he could twist it into his nose and deliver a strange kind of speech from thence; and the account of his appetite for the livid snuffs of burning candle "which issuing in a glowing steam from both his eyes as well as his nostrils and his mouth, made his head appear in a dark night like the skull of an ass wherein a roguish boy hath conveyed a farthing candle"; and the filthy satire of the sect called Aeolists. After describing the barrels from which they preach and the means by which inspiration is conveyed to them, he proceeds:

[1] *The Countermine.* By One who does passionately wish the prosperity of the Church, his King and Country, 1677.

"Whereupon you behold him swell immediately to the shape and size of his vessel. In this posture he disembogues whole tempests upon his auditory, as the spirit from beneath gives him utterance, which, issuing *ex adytis et penetralibus*, is not performed without much pain and gripings. And the wind, in breaking forth, deals with his face as it does with that of the sea, first blackening, then wrinkling, and at last bursting it into a foam. It is in this guise the sacred Aeolist delivers his oracular belches to his panting disciples; of whom some are greedily gaping after the sanctified breath, others are all the while hymning out the praises of the winds; and, gently wafted to and fro by their own humming, do thus represent the soft breezes of their deities appeased."[1]

2

In the digressions Swift stretches the net of his satire to take in all the abuses of the writing of his time—the poor poet's *second parts* and plagiarisms, the great poet's complaints of his sufferings; the critic who is all spleen and the author who is all obscurity. He confounds together Etcaetera the Younger, whose never-dying works are no more to be found, and John Dryden, whose translation of Virgil in folio may not yet be devoured by time: those noble authors who but for a rainy day or a fit of spleen would not have written, and those dark authors whose works can be understood only by adepts and even by them only after fervent prayer and much transposition of letters and syllables: Tom D'Urfey, Nahum Tate, John Dennis, Roger L'Estrange, writers of his own time and to some extent writers in his own manner, are tossed up in the same blanket with the author of *Anthroposophia Theomagica*, and other mystics, cabalists and alchemists.

[1] *Works*, vol. i. p. 109.

At first sight it may seem surprising that in the Digressions where he attacks the Moderns, there should be so much about the mystic Thomas Vaughan, the alchemist, Sendivogus, and their kind. But it should be remembered that *A Tale of a Tub* was to be an *Iliad* in a nutshell, a satire of the modern fashion of jumbling fifty different things together, of serving up "soups and ollios, fricassees and ragouts" to one's readers. Besides, he had a special reason for introducing them: they, like Peter, Martin and Jack, were strongly infected by that tincture of enthusiasm which leads men to believe that they are nobler and more spiritual beings than they are. Thirty years before, his master, Samuel Butler, had had the same idea of alchemists and mystics, and had brought together in one person a believer in gifts of prophecy and a believer in Rosicrucian lore. Ralpho in *Hudibras*,[1] the dark lanthorn of the spirit, was:

> A deep occult Philosopher,
> As learn'd as the *Wild Irish* are,
> Or Sir Agrippa, for profound
> And solid Lying much renown'd:
> He *Anthroposophus* and *Floud*,
> And *Jacob Behmen* understood;
> Knew many an Amulet and Charm,
> That would do neither good nor harm:
> In *Rosy-Crucian* Lore as Learned,
> As he that *Vere adeptus* earned.

Alchemy had not been completely discredited in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. Between 1650 and 1700 both in England and France was published a whole library of books addressed to all grades of understanding, directing them how to find that seminal virtue, that elixir or philosopher's stone which can transmute all other metals into gold. Sendivogus's *Lumen*, the clearest exposition of alchemist faith and

[1] *Hudibras*, 1674, p. 32.

practice, was translated into English in 1650, and about 1680 the booksellers had on their stalls at least a dozen works in which they are popularly explained. They were written in a mystic religious strain; their readers were warned not to reveal their secrets to the ignorant and the scoffers; and they were adjured to seek their ends by prayer and fasting. In them is collected for the last time all the rubbish of centuries of working with Mercuries and Sols and Balneum Mariaes. They are not altogether rubbish, indeed. Sendivogus, following his master, Paracelsus, was trying to discover the secrets of Nature in the composition of metals. He had an idea that the metals propagated themselves in a way akin to that of animals and plants; and he thought that by reducing them to their elements and subliming and purging these, he could find their hidden seminal virtue. From such investigation was about to spring the phoenix, modern chemistry.

In all this Swift saw a ludicrous and knavish imposture; and he ridiculed it in his recipe for compiling a book of universal knowledge. "You take fair correct copies, well bound in calf-skin, and lettered at the back, of all modern bodies of arts and sciences whatsoever, and in what language you please. These you distil IN BALNEO MARIAE, infusing quintessence of poppy Q.S., together with three pints of Lethes, to be had from the apothecaries. You cleanse away carefully the SORDES and CAPUT MORTUUM, letting all that is volatile evaporate. You preserve only the first running, which is again to be distilled seventeen times, till what remains will amount to about two drams. This you keep in a glass vial, hermetically sealed, for one-and-twenty days. Then you begin your Catholic treatise, taking every morning fasting, first shaking the vial, three drops of this elixir, snuffing it strongly up your nose. It will dilate itself

about the brain (where there is any) in fourteen minutes, and you immediately perceive in your head an infinite number of abstracts, summaries, compendiums, extracts, collections, medullas, EXCERPTA QUAEDAMS, FLORILEGIAS, and the like, all disposed into great order, and reducible upon paper."

The aim of the alchemist was, as I have said, to discover by subliming gold that purified air which is the seminal virtue in metals. He identified this purified air with the living principle of the human soul and with that principle or spirit in the universe which holds it together and which one day will disband it and frame a new heaven and a new earth. He spoke of it as a fiery piercing spirit, as a heavenly supernatural fire, and compared it to the water and spirit of the New Testament by which all things are born anew. The seventeenth-century books on alchemy wreathe their recipes for finding the philosopher's stone in clouds of such mystical talk. And there were some in whom there was nothing but mystical talk, the chief of them being Thomas Vaughan, whose book, *Anthroposophia Theomagica*, Swift calls the most unintelligible fustian ever published in any language.

In one of his tracts, the *Anima Abscondita*, Thomas Vaughan pours scorn on Aristotle and his followers, on their definitions and syllogisms, on their inability to see into the essence of things or tell more of them than a ploughman. Then he himself reveals the great secret of nature as it had been delivered to him by his master, Cornelius Agrippa.

"It is obvious to all those whom Nature hath inrich'd with sence and convenient Organs to exercise it, That every body in the World is subject to a certain species of motion. Animals have their Progressive outward and their vital inward motions. . . . The air

moves variously, the sea hath its flux and reflux› vegetables have their growth and augmentation which necessarily infer a concoction. . . . To be plain then, this principle is *anima mundi* or the universal spirit of nature. This *anima* is retained in the matter by certain other Proportionate natures, and missing a vent doth organizare molem. She labours what she can to resume her former liberty, frames for herself a habitation there in the centre, puts her person into some good order, and brancheth into the several members, that she may have more room to act and employ her faculties. But you are to observe that in every Frame there are three leading principles. The first is this *anima* whereof we have spoken something already. The second is that which is called *spiritus mundi* and this spirit is the medium *per quod anima infunditur et movet suum corpus*. The third is a certain oleous aethereal water . . ."[1]

This is the kind of thing Swift parodies in the nonsense of the opening sentences of Section viii. "The learned Aeolists maintain the original cause of all things to be wind, from which principle this whole universe was at first produced, and into which it must at last be resolved; that the same breath, which had kindled, and blew up the flame of nature, should one day blow it out:

Quod procul a nobis flectat fortuna gubernans.

This is what the *adepti* understand by their *anima mundi*; that is to say, the spirit, or breath, or wind of the world; for examine the whole system by the particulars of nature, and you will find it not to be disputed. For whether you please to call the *forma informans* of man by the name of *spiritus*, *animus*, *afflatus* or *anima*; what are all these but several appellations for wind, which is the ruling element in every compound, and into which they

[1] *Anima Magica Abscondita*. By Eugenius Philalethes, 1650, p. 9.

all resolve upon their corruption? Further, what is life itself, but, as it is commonly called, the breath of our nostrils?"[1]

Yet though Swift parodies the fustian of the mystical alchemists, that was not his chief intention in introducing it. Books on alchemy were still read at the end of the century, both popular explanations of the older methods and learned works on the transmutation of metals by members of the Royal Society. But works like Vaughan's were dead, as they deserved to be. There was no need any longer to ridicule their unintelligible jargon and nonsensical raving. Swift introduces them with a solemn appearance of great knowledge to provide himself with a means of delivering his vile and obscene attack on the Presbyterians and Quakers. In this section he writes three or four pages of nastiness that cannot be paralleled by himself. But he does not merely dabble in muck: he builds a pagoda of wit out of it that has a crazy resemblance to the systems of Vaughan and his like. He rakes in the dunghill; but he does not throw honest dunghill words at those preachers who derive subterranean inspiration from σκοτια or the land of darkness: he makes them ten times more disgusting by dressing them up in the ravings of the mystical alchemists.

3

Many veins of satire run through *A Tale of a Tub*—the satire on Bentley and Wotton, on Dryden and Dennis and the wits, on the mystics, philosophers and Brethren of the Rosy Cross, and the satire on the Churches. Yet all branch from one stock, the ridiculous presumption of man. He puffs himself up with various enthusiasms. He builds himself scaffoldings of various kinds from which he makes himself seem more important

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, p. 106.

than he is—the pulpit, the ladder (that is, the gallows) and the stage itinerant. He invents a philosophy that says that the most rational and refined creatures are suits of clothes. "What is man himself but a micro-coat, or rather a complete suit of clothes with all its trimmings? . . . For, is it not manifest that they (suits of clothes) live, and move, and talk, and perform all other offices of human life? Are not beauty and wit and mien and breeding their inseparable proprieties? In short, we see nothing but them, hear nothing but them? Is it not they who walk the streets, fill up parliament, . . . coffee, . . . play, . . . bawdy-houses?"

All this is put most powerfully in Section ix. In Section viii. he has given an account of the Aeolists founded by Jack. At the beginning of Section ix. he supposes us to be full of wonder that so famous a sect should have had its origin in the brain of so crazy a fellow. But in this there is nothing marvellous: all the great systems of religion and philosophy and all the glorious conquests of history have had just as humble beginnings.

The source of all human action is vapours. Their origin matters nothing; a vapour is always a vapour whether it rise from an altar or a dunghill. A king loves a distant female; a protuberancy raised by her eyes emits a vapour which, rising to his brain, makes him dream of conquests, assemble fleets and armies and make all Europe tremble.

The great systems of philosophy were created in the same way. Epicurus, Diogenes, Apollonius, Lucretius, Paracelsus, Descartes, if they appeared now in the world, would be in danger of whips and chains, a dark chamber and straw. There is a string in the human brain which, when struck by the vapour, produces a certain effect: should it happen that this string is tuned

to the same pitch in many minds, then he who is first moved by the vapour will have many disciples; but should its construction be peculiar to himself, he will be counted a madman.

It is much more pleasant to be the creature of vapours than to pass one's life in the common forms under the rule of reason. The brain by its nature does not dispose a man to subdue multitudes to his power, philosophy or religion; and the more a man is conversant with the best of human learning, the less is he inclined to form parties after his particular notions. But how fading and insipid is the life of such a man! How shrunk everything appears! Far better to be deluded by a vapour, to set fancy astride reason, and kick common sense and understanding out of doors!

What exactly does Swift mean by this account of man as the creature of vapours?

In the first place, he is attacking philosophy as being a kind of enthusiasm, and especially he is attacking the philosophy of Descartes. The whole section is a parody of Descartes' system.

Descartes, in his effort to make all knowledge as clear and true to himself as *Cogito, ergo sum,* tries to explain the universe in terms of extension and movement. He speaks of human bodies and the bodies of animals as machines which run by their own heat, that being the movement communicated to them at conception. The nerves convey messages to the brain, and the animal spirits, a kind of subtle flame that runs along the nerves, make the muscles elongate and contract. He gives examples of how the machine works. When we fall in love, the animal spirits flow fast, and produce heat about the heart; the indigestion and general well-being improve. When we hate, the animal spirits produce feelings of cold. All the passions have their seats in one

organ of the body or another, the brain, or the liver, or the spleen, or the heart. Earlier philosophers had thought of the passions as rising in the soul. Descartes could not understand such a belief. He said, however, that the passions might pass into the soul through the pineal gland which he regarded as its seat: and he allowed, too, that the passions might in some degree be controlled by the soul.

In the account of how vapours rise from the lower faculties like mists from a dunghill, and in the account of how they strike the brain at different angles and so produce so different madmen as Alexander the Great, Jack of Leyden and Monsieur Descartes, Swift is making a mock of Descartes' doctrine of the passions.

In the second place Section ix. is a bitter ironical satire delivered through the grossest imagery against man's pretensions to be more than a creature of earth. He conquers empires, creates philosophies, thinks himself a very fine fellow; flies up into the clouds on the broomstick of imagination. It would be far better for him if he would be content with himself as reason tells him he is. It is true that under the scalpel of reason he cuts a very sorry figure. "Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the carcass of a beau to be stripped in my presence, when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under one suit of clothes." But far better to know the truth than to reach that sublime and refined point of felicity called the possession of being well deceived.

Swift in his bitter way tells men to see themselves as they are and not to be deceived by pretentious philosophies, sham heroes and false religions. He says with Lear: "Unaccommodated man is a poor, bare, forked animal. Off, off, you lendings!" Better the sorry spectacle

that is hidden beneath them than to put one's faith in red gowns, ermine capes and gold chains.

Many writers in the seventeenth century had said something like this. Montaigne[1] is always reminding us of the presumption of man: the most wretched and the frailest of created beings, born in the mire and dung of the world, he imagines himself soaring beyond the moon and ruling the heavens. He sets continents at war with one another and crowns himself with glory; but if his motives were examined, they would be found to be the same as those which make two fishwives quarrel or a master whip his lacquey. Boileau[2] asks what a donkey would say, if it could give its opinion of the ribbons, velvets and lace with which men trick out their pretentious follies.

> Que peut-il penser lorsque dans une rue
> Au milieu de Paris il promène sa vue:
> Qu'il voit de toutes parts les hommes bigarrés,
> Les uns gris, les uns noirs, les autres chamarrés? . . .
>
> Qu'il trouve de pedants un escadron fourré,
> Suivi par un recteur des bedeaux entouré.

In a sense, then, *A Tale of a Tub* is no bitter isolated outcry. Others before Swift had said that Alexander the Great and Louis XIV. and Descartes were mad, and that at best the philosophies of mankind were like the birthday suits of a beau. But Swift is unique in this that he could not tranquilly accept his own findings or at least sleep in decent peace over them. His discoveries enraged him; and he spluttered out vile abuse of the mankind whose folly and impotence he had discovered.[3]

[1] "Apologie de Raymonde de Sebonde," *Œuvres de Montaigne*, 1781, vol. ii. p. 256.

[2] Boileau, 8th *Satire*.

[3] *A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit* appeared in the volume of 1704 with *The Battle of the Books* and

A Tale of a Tub. It is another, and perhaps an early, version of Sections eight and nine of the *Tale.* In it he satirises again the "tincture of enthusiasm" and "fanatic strain" that are found in all human societies and in every form of human life. It is strong in the kingdom of knowledge, in ideas about the Philosopher's Stone, the Grand Elixir, the Planetary World, the Squaring of the Circle, the Summum Bonum, Utopian Commonwealths. It is strong also in religion. Europeans think that they pray to their gods in a much more enlightened way than the wild Indians; but the chief difference is that the Indians go down on their knees to avert their fears, while we go down on our knees to further our desires. The Indian keeps his Gods and Devils apart: we, though we have raised God to the *Coelum Empyreum* and given the Devil saucer-eyes and a tail, are never quite sure of the bounds within each should walk: we are always confusing Christ and Belial, Cloven Tongues and Cloven Feet.

This "tincture of enthusiasm" is specially strong among Roundheads, Quakers and all their kind, and he tells how it may be induced by Mechanical Operation. There are, he says, four ways of transporting the souls beyond matter: inspiration, the immediate act of God; possession, the immediate act of the Devil; the effect of strong imagination, spleen, violent anger; and mechanic operation. He gives some examples of the last. The race of Roundheads is now spread over three kingdoms, yet at the beginning it was produced by a pair of scissors, a squeeze of the face and a black cap. Such heads being frequently exposed in assemblies, Nature took the hint, and produced them of herself. When the modern saints wish to induce the spirit by this means, "they violently strain their eyeballs inward, half closing the lids: then, as they sit, they are in a perpetual motion of see-saw, making long hums at proper periods, and continuing the sound at equal height, choosing their time in those intermissions while the preacher is at ebb." Should any one doubt the possibility of invoking the spirit in this way, he reminds them that a knot of Irishmen and Irishwomen grow visionary and spiritual by the influence of a short pipe of tobacco handed round the company.

In the second of the two sections comes his account of how canting originated through mechanic operation: and his comparison of the process of modern courtship to the behaviour of the Saints in the act of worship. He ends with the words: "Let that be as it will, thus much is certain, that however spiritual intrigues begin, they generally conclude like all others; they may branch upwards towards heaven, but the root is in the earth." The sentence sufficiently indicates his argument.

Here again Swift has given his satire a universal application: nowhere is he more up-to-the-minute. If he lived to-day, he would find his Jack Leyden followed about by a community of women in the film-star who cannot escape from his female admirers: the scenes where they shriek and gesticulate and tear his clothes to shreds, he would parallel to the death of Dionysos. As to the flesh playing leap-frog with the spirit, where could he have found that better exemplified than in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*? Yet though he is so modern, his satire has lost much of its sting. We can enjoy his wit with free hearts. With the advent of the bathing costume as the fashionable summer dress, sex is no longer a furtive bogey. We no more associate vileness with it than we do with the incoming tide. The leap-frog of the flesh and the spirit is obscene no longer.

CHAPTER IV

IRELAND AND ENGLAND (1700–1710)

I

THE next period of Swift's life stretches from his thirty-second to his forty-second year, from the death of Sir William Temple in July 1699 to Swift's return to Ireland in 1709, after his unsuccessful mission to London to obtain the remission of the First Fruits for the Irish clergy. In it he published *Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome* (1701), *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* (1704), the *Partridge Papers* (1708), and several pamphlets in support of the Church of England and the Church of Ireland. He wrote, too, a number of poems, though not all of them were printed at this time.

It was the happiest period of Swift's life. He laughed and jested with three Lord-Lieutenants and their households; he had Hester Johnson near him, and with her looking on, built his vicarage at Laracor, dug his canal and planted his "sallies"; when he went to London, he was welcomed, at least after 1707, as uncrowned king of the literary world. He was not altogether contented: he wished to be a Dean or a Bishop or to hold a political office. But he had scope for his restless energy: he enjoyed the day that lay before him, and he was full of hope for the future. His discontent kept him from declining into an Irish Philemon. Looking back from a later disillusioned time he found that in these years he had been thrust aside by scoundrels here and mocked by promises there. But one must remember that in all his own accounts of

his earlier life he allowed misanthropy and anger to darken his narrative.

Yet Swift was himself in these years. The sunshine in his life was the sunshine of a cold, stinging day. His merriment had violence and even a touch of cruelty in it, as can very well be seen in his contemptible persecution of Partridge, the almanac-maker. His contentment swelled into self-importance and scorn for those inferior to him in any way. His proud spirit closed its wings and veiled its arrogance only in his love for Hester Johnson.

One tendency in the life of these years must be specially noticed, the decline of his allegiance to the Whigs. The Whig historians, Lord Stanhope and Lord Macaulay, lose no opportunity of holding Swift up to contumely, saying, in the language of the Victorian club-room, that he "ratted" from the Whigs. But Forster and Craik have shown that he did nothing of the kind. From the year in which he became Vicar of Laracor, he was a Whig only in that he supported the Revolution settlement, and never was a Non-juror nor a Jacobite. He was a Tory in his devotion to the Church of England, in his determination that it must be protected against the attacks of Dissenters, Presbyterians and Free-thinkers. He wrote only one pamphlet in support of the Whigs, a mild and somewhat academic treatise. It is impossible to imagine him at any time becoming enthusiastic over the war policy or the church policy of the Whigs. Swift did not "rat." The worst that can be said of him is that in later years he traduced the men whom he had courted and flattered, while he was struggling into fame.

It is not easy to unravel the story of Swift's life in this period, for he moved in three or four spheres at once; in the same month planting sallies along the Laracor, punning and speaking the Castilian language with Lord Pembroke in Dublin Castle, discoursing

familiarly in London with Lord Somers or dining at a chophouse with Addison and Steele. I shall deal, therefore, with each of these activities in turn.

2

Sir William Temple died in July 1699. What happened immediately thereafter is best told by giving the pertinent paragraphs of the *Fragment of Autobiography*:

"Upon this event Mr. Swift removed to London, and applied by petition to King William upon the claim of a promise his Majesty had made to Sir William Temple, that he would give Mr. Swift a prebend of Canterbury or Westminster. Colonel Henry Sidney, lately created Earl of Romney, who professed much friendship for him, and was now in some credit at Court, on account of his early services to the King in Holland before the Revolution . . . promised to second Mr. Swift's petition, but said not a word to the King. And Mr. Swift, having totally relied on this lord's honour, and having neglected to use any other instrument of reminding his Majesty of the promise made to Sir William Temple, after long attendance in vain, thought it better to comply with an invitation, given him by the Earl of Berkeley, to attend him to Ireland, as his chaplain and private secretary: his lordship having been appointed one of the Lords Justices of that Kingdom. . . . He attended his lordship, who landed near Waterford; and Mr. Swift acted as secretary the whole journey to Dublin. But another person had so far insinuated himself into the Earl's favour, by telling him that the post of secretary was not proper for a clergyman, nor would be of any advantage to one who aimed only at church preferments, that his lordship after a poor apology gave that office to another.

"In some months the Deanery of Derry fell vacant;

and it was the Earl of Berkeley's turn to dispose of it. Yet things were so ordered that the secretary having received a bribe, the Deanery was disposed of to another, and Mr. Swift was put off with some other church livings not worth above a third part of that rich Deanery; and at this present time, not a sixth: namely, the Rectory of Agher, and the Vicarage of Laracor and Rathbeggan in the Diocese of Meath; for which his letters patent bear date the 24th February following. The excuse pretended was his being too young, although he were then thirty years old.

"The next year, in 1700, his grace Narcissus, Lord Archbishop of Dublin, was pleased to confer upon Mr. Swift the Prebend of Dunlaven in the Cathedral of St. Patrick's."

Swift had a grudge against his father and mother for bringing him into the world; he had a grudge against his Uncle Godwin for giving him the education of a dog; and a grudge against Sir William Temple for not treating him as his equal; and now he has a grudge against Lord Berkeley for not making him a Dean or a Bishop after a few weeks of acquaintanceship. Swift was on the best of terms with his wife and his three daughters. He deafened them with puns and rhyme; he made a din of liveliness in their house. But Lord Berkeley may have heard that some of his verses were intolerably coarse, and that he had scrawled a lewd caricature of himself.[1] At anyrate, though it was the custom for Lord-Lieutenants to push forward their chaplains shamelessly, and to trample down every religious decency in the rush to get them preferment, he thought he had done very well to get him the livings of Rathbeggan and Laracor; and in Swift's after-life it was only by the greatest

[1] "The Problem," *Poems*, vol. i. p. 44.

pressure that he found any one willing to go beyond Lord Berkeley in granting him Church preferment.

But in spite of his grudge against Lord Berkeley, Swift was not unhappy in his household. All his writings were not of the kind that had to be shut up in a drawer, or passed from one friend to another with vows of secrecy and furtive laughter. It was to his Countess he gravely read from a book that seemed to be Boyle's *Meditations* his own Meditation, "Surely Man is a Broomstick," about which only an elderly lady on a sleepy afternoon could have gone wrong. It was in the chamber of his daughter, Lady Betty, that Mrs. Frances Harris made the mistake about her £7, 4s. 6d. plus farthings, for the supposed loss of which she made a claim to marry the parson.

Lord Berkeley was recalled to England at the beginning of 1701. With the next Lord-Lieutenant Swift had no connection, but he became chaplain of the Duke of Ormond who succeeded him (1703–4), and began a friendship with him and his daughters that lasted through life. No verses commemorate this friendship, but scattered through his letters are sentences that prove its reality.

It is said that he introduced himself to Lord Pembroke (Lord-Lieutenant in 1706 and 1707) by a pun. Coming to pay his respects to him he found him listening to a discourse on the commonwealth or nation of bees; on which Swift remarked that they were a very ancient nation, Moses having numbered the Hivites among the nations Joshua was appointed to conquer. In Pembroke's train as usher of his court was Sir Andrew Fountaine of Narford in Norfolkshire, a virtuoso, whom Pope dragged into the fourth book of the *Dunciad* as a typical collector of gems and coins. He and Pembroke and Swift, and Swift's three college friends—the brothers

Ashe—St. George, Dillon and Tom—soon formed a merry company, the chief delight of which was to make puns, or, as they put it themselves, to converse in the Castilian language. In the records of it that exist there are no masterpieces of punning: Swift's triumphs in this art date from a later period; but he liked the little society; he liked to get into a little room with them and be happy with wine and conversation.

But it was not only in Dublin Castle and in Trinity College that Swift found happiness in these years. He had advised Hester Johnson that her little fortune would go further in Ireland than in England; and influenced by this advice, and no doubt also by her friendship for him, she had crossed to Dublin at the beginning of 1701 in the company of her friend, Rebecca Dingley, a distant relative of Sir William Temple who, like herself, had a place in his household. This was an extraordinary situation. Hester Johnson was only nineteen years of age at this time: her mother was still living and had many years still to live, and had not yet re-married; yet she had gone to a strange land and put herself and her affairs under the protection of Swift. The presence of Mrs. Dingley made things little better: she was about Swift's age, but she was colourless in character; and it must have been clear to every one that she was there simply to save appearances, to be the woman with the embroidery at the back of the room. No wonder that tongues wagged. The citizens of London and Dublin in 1701 were hardened to statesmen and judges flaunting their mistresses before them; and probably they thought that this young imperious-looking clergyman, who had been chaplain to the Lord-Lieutenant, was imitating their example. But they were wrong. He loved this girl neither as a mistress nor a wife, but with a love which, among all his rancours

and hatreds, was his one place of joy. And he had determined to keep it in face of a thousand censorious tongues. He browbeat Dublin into accepting their relationship at his own valuation. Swift in his iron armour of egoism was indifferent to scandal; Hester Johnson's youth and innocence protected her from its worst stings. Very soon, such was the propriety of her conduct, that it had died down altogether, at least in the little circle of clergymen, merchants and minor officials to whom Swift introduced her. They accepted the unusual friendship as a normal part of their lives, and as a new source of happiness for them.

One member of the circle was Deane Sterne of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the "little black dean." Hester Johnson and Mrs. Dingley used to dine and wine with him, then play at cards for small sums, till they had lost, according to Swift's banter, 1/10d. or 3/4d. or 4/11d. The two ladies regularly visited Mrs. Stoyte, the wife of a Dublin merchant, who with her husband and daughter lived at Donnybrook, taking a sixpenny coach to the far end of St. Stephen's Green, then buckling up their skirts and walking the rest of the way. Archdeacon Walls, vicar of the diminutive church at Castleknock, kept a school in Dublin: he was a decent, unobtrusive fellow, "incurious as a cow" and too much under the subjection of his wife. She often was having children, and Hester Johnson spent so much time nursing her that Swift complained that she forgot to answer his letters. Manley, the Postmaster-General, and his wife were among their ombre-playing friends. Sometimes St. George Ashe, the Bishop of Clogher, and his brothers, Tom Ashe and Dillon Ashe, visited them. Swift, in the *Journal to Stella*, writes on April 10, 1711, as if they were well known to her: "Is Dilly gone to Bath? His face will whiz in the water." And again on August 24, 1711: "Dilly

is not tired at all with England, but intends to continue here a good while; he is mighty easy to be at a distance from his two sisters-in-law. He finds some sort of scrub acquaintance; goes now and then in disguise to a play, smokes his pipe; reads now and then a little trash, and what else, the Lord knows."

When Swift went to Laracor for a long period, the two ladies accompanied him, and lodged either in a cottage near the vicarage or with Dr. Raymond, Vicar of Trim. Laracor is about two miles from Trim, half-way between it and the mansion where the Duke of Wellington was born. Behind it rises steeply the Hill of Bree, from the top of which you may see one of the widest and most fertile expanses of country in Ireland, wood and rich grass-land, as far as the eye can reach. Swift caused the vicarage to be rebuilt; and laboured with his own hands to make a little garden on the model of the gardens at Moor Park. The water that came down from the slope behind the house, he drained into a canal, which he kept full to the brim by an elaborate system of oaken sluices. He laid out a "holly-walk" and made a path and planted "sallies" along the Laracor, a splendid trout-stream that runs between high banks at the foot of the garden. His own words tell of his affection for this place. "I should be plaguy busy at Laracor if I were there now," he writes from London in February 1711, "cutting down willows, planting others, scouring my canal, and every kind of thing. If Raymond goes over this summer, you must submit, and make them a visit, that we may have another eel and trout fishing; and that Stella may ride by and see Presto in his morning-gown in the garden, and so go up with Joe to the Hill of Bree, and round by Scurlock's Town. O Lord, how I remember names! faith it gives me short sighs: therefore no more of that if you love me." In

London he is always wondering whether the flowers and blossoms are out at Laracor, if the score of apples from his Golden Pippin are worth eating, and how the cherry trees on the river bank are doing. "O that we were at Laracor this fine day! the willows begin to peep, and the quicks to bud. My dream's out: I was a-dreaming last night that I eat ripe cherries. And now they begin to catch the pikes, and will shortly the trouts (pox on these ministers), and I would fain know whether the floods were ever so high as to get over the holly bank or the river walk; if so, then all my pikes are gone; but I hope not."[1]

3

Though Swift was happy in Ireland between 1700 and 1709, and though his heart was in Ireland, he hankered after the life of London and its possibilities of fame and promotion; and he contrived to cross many times to England for long stays there. To us the eighteenth-century voyage across the Irish Channel in a sailing-ship, and a long journey on horseback from Chester to London, seem very arduous; but Dubliners took them as lightly as Americans now take the ocean trip from New York. In London Swift was always running up against Irish acquaintances, and at one time or another entertained all his Irish friends. Hester Johnson and Mrs. Dingley crossed twice between 1700 and 1704.

On Swift's visit of 1704 he published anonymously *A Tale of a Tub*. Then followed three years in which he did not leave Ireland; for, though all his biographers say that he crossed in 1705, there is no record of such a crossing, as Mr. Elrington Ball has shown. In 1707 he travelled to London again, this time charged by the Church of Ireland to do what he could to obtain a

[1] *Journal to Stella*, March 19, 1711.

remission of the First Fruits. But besides being dignified with this office, he came now as a writer, whose greatness the wits at last understood. On earlier visits he had paid his respects to the great Whig Lords and been well received by them as a likely supporter of their cause and as the secretary Sir William Temple had trusted. But he had remained a comparative stranger in London, too proud to make himself known in the coffee-houses, and with no book or poem to draw attention to himself. In December 1707 he entered London as the greatest literary genius of his age. A month after his arrival Addison is inviting him to dinner, and in a few weeks more he and Swift and Steele form a triumvirate. It must have been at this time that Addison sent him a copy of his *Travels to Italy* with the inscription: "To Doctor Jonathan Swift, The Most Agreeable Companion, The Truest Friend, and the Greatest Genius of his Age," to which Swift's response was that Addison had worth enough to give reputation to an age. Addison's name continually recurs in his *Letters* and in his memoranda of tavern expenses. They were sufficient company for one another, he says over a pint of bad wine. When Addison went over to Ireland as First Secretary to Lord Wharton, the Lord-Lieutenant, Swift introduced him as an excellent person and his most intimate friend. He told him that if he settled in Ireland he would make him king there. He showed him his *Baucis and Philemon*, and blotted out four score lines, added four score, and altered four score to please him. Nothing hurt him more in 1710 when he went over to the Tories than that Addison should treat him dryly. This is an astonishing tribute to a man whom modern wits, following Pope, misrepresent as effeminately sensitive, supercilious and commonplace.

He became friendly, too, with Ambrose Philips, and

many of the minor Whig writers. To Ambrose Philips, who was for a time with his regiment in the north of England, he wrote gay, jesting letters, telling him that he might please the York ladies from the distance of a window but that if he went nearer, he would be deceived.[1] Can love ripen where gooseberries will not, he asks? And he tells him of the good old lady living five miles from London, who asked him what these *uproars* were her daughter was talking about. His letters to Colonel Hunter, who had been taken a prisoner by the French while on a voyage to Virginia, were in the same lively tone. There has been, he writes, a great frost for three weeks and one has been able to eat gingerbread from a booth on the Thames. Biddy Floyd, the famous beauty, looked out with both eyes, and they had one day's thaw.[2] He helped Steele with his Gazetteer, and contributed to his *Tatler* a poem in a perfectly new strain, describing things exactly as they are—his *Morning*. It was with the connivance and help of the Whig wits that he sprang on Europe and the Town his enormous "lie" that Louis XIV. would die on July 29, 1708, and that John Partridge—or Patridge—the maker of violent anti-Jacobite and anti-Papist almanacs, would die of a raging fever at eleven at night exactly four months earlier; and added on All Fools' Day a minute eye-witness's account of how he had expired three hours and fifty-five minutes before the appointed time.

In Queen Anne's time a very large number of almanacs was published every year: for example, in 1708 there appeared among others, *Pond's Almanac*, *Poor Robin*, *Angelus Britannicus*, *Celestial Observations*, *Merlinus Anglicus Jr.*, *Vox Stellarum*, *The Speculum Anni*.

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 100.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 134.

Each addressed its own public, supplying that kind of useful information given by modern diaries as well as "extraordinary news from the stars." *The Chapman's and Traveller's Almanac* contained a Ready Reckoner and lists of Market-Days and Fairs; *The Ladies' Diary* had receipts for cooking and enigmas. The contents of Partridge's *Almanac* for 1708 are typical. It contained:

1. An advertisement of his Purging Pills.
2. A Perpetual Table of Sun-Rising and Setting, Length of Day and Break of Day.
3. A Table of the Kings of England.
4. A General Tide-table.
5. A Table of the Terms and their Returns for the Year 1708.
6. A Poem on the Glorious Union of the Two Kingdoms. By way of Introduction:

> Henceforth no more Disputes about this Point,
> If George or Andrew is the greater Saint;
> Nor yet which Nation of the Two is best,
> Or who with most Religion most is blest.
> Nation is all but Cant, the honest Man
> Under each Elevation's still the same.
> Orion in the South doth not appear
> To be more glorious than the Northern Bear.

7. The months of the Year with times of the rising and setting of the sun, moon and planets and the saints' days. Each month is followed by a Monthly Observation. Here is February:

> Firm Endeavours and Resolutions about Peace, and the Methods and Ways to attain it; and to that end Agents, Envoys and Ambassadors are dispatcht to several Courts to solicit both in Publick and Private in order to effect it. Application made to the Queen of England also to that end. God direct Her Council in this great Work. I had rather have no peace than not to have a durable one: it is a hard case to treat and agree with one that hath neither Conscience nor Honesty.

Mars is got into ♒ and shews a sort of Free-Booters or Moss-Troopers to be ranging abroad among the oppress'd Slaves in Tartary, Muscovy, Arabia, and perhaps some slight rebellion in some of those Countries and Dominions caus'd by Oppression. ♄ is in ♊ in square to the Sun in ♓: Flanders seems mightily harassed and impoverish'd by the Soldiery and the Boors complain. Spain will be but in a very sorry condition as long as ♄ is in ♊.

8. A General Judgment on the Four Quarters of the Heavens.
9. Eclipses.
10. A word or two on the Division of the Heavens.

Prophecy, it will be noticed, does not take up very much space; and what there is of it is little better than gibberish, the clacking of the tongue by which the mountebank draws the crowd round him. The almanacs that are still thrust into letter-boxes and beneath doors to advertise pills and tonics would not be read even in the kitchen, if their prognostications were so meagre and so general. Yet the prophecies might well be regarded as a folly of society and a danger to it: many an ignorant squire may have had his brains inflamed by puzzling over their paltry old cant and astrological pot-hooks. The almanacs were a fair mark for the satirist.

Swift went about his task with characteristic harshness. Addison or Steele would have created an almanac-maker in effigy and pelted him with satire. Swift chose an actual person, John Partridge, and chose him because he was the most violent Whig and Protestant-Settlement man of all the almanac-makers.[1]

[1] Title-Page of *Merlinus Liberatus*:

MERLINUS LIBERATUS:
Being an
Almanack
For the Year of our Blessed Saviour's Incarnation 1708.
And from the Creation of the World, according to

The papers he wrote are masterpieces of their kind. In the first Isaac Bickerstaff professes to believe in the noble art of astrology in spite of the discredit the *Philomaths* have brought on it; but he admits that reason may sometimes overcome the influence of a planet, though this is unlikely in great events where large numbers of men are involved. Then he mentions a trifle, the death of Partridge on the 29th of March 1708; and adds, to show his powers, a list of prophecies: that for instance a Mareschal of the King of France will break his leg on May 9, and that the King himself will die on July 29.

the best of Prophane History, 5657. But
by the Account of Holy Scripture, 5670.
It being the Bissextile or Leap-Year
And the Nineteenth of our Deliverance by
King William from
Popery and Arbitrary Government:
But the Twelfth from the
Horrid Popish Jacobite Plot:
In which is contained Things fitting
for such a Work:
As the Diurnal Motion of the Planets,
Conjunctions, Lunations, Eclipses, Astrological
Observations on the Twelve Months, and the
Four Quarters of the Year. A nativity of violent
Death. An offer about the Division of the
Heavens, proving this in general use false and
groundless; and desiring they that use it would
Amend it. Also a merry Story of a Conjurer at
Aldgate, that alters Constitutions.

Calculated and referr'd to the Meridian of London,
whose $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{Longitude}\\\text{Latitude}\end{matrix}\right\}$ is $\left\{\begin{matrix}24\\51\end{matrix}\right\}$ degr. $\left\{\begin{matrix}20\\32\end{matrix}\right\}$ minutes

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By John Partridge,
Student in Physick and Astrology, at the
Blue Ball in Salisbury Street, in the
Strand, London.

Ducunt volentem Fata, Nolentem trahunt.

London: Printed by Mary Roberts, For the Company of
Stationers.

In the *Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions*, a moving account is given of Partridge's illness and death-bed repentance. "I then asked him why he had not calculated his own nativity, to see whether it agreed with Bickerstaff's prediction? At which he shook his head, and said, 'Oh, sir, this is no time for jesting, but for repenting these fooleries, as I do now from the very bottom of my heart.' "

This was followed by *Squire Bickerstaff detected; or, The Astrological Impostor convicted by John Partridge, Student in Physic and Astrology*, in which with farcical humour the undertaker is described hanging Partridge's house with black in spite of his protests and his wife's cudgel, and the sexton knocks at the door to say that the coffin is ready and to announce the approach of a company of "dismals." It was written by a number of wits who could not keep out of the jest.[1] When Partridge in his almanac of 1709 thanked God that he was still alive and well, though old, Swift, as Isaac Bickerstaff, pointed out that this could not be; his wife had gone about saying that he had not body and soul in him, and certain gentlemen on reading his almanac had cried out betwixt rage and laughter, "they were sure no man alive ever writ such damned stuff."

Leslie Stephen says of the *Bickerstaff Papers*: "The joke does not strike me, I will confess, as of very exquisite flavour. . . . In these days the mutual understanding of the little clique of wits made it easy to get a hoax taken up by the whole body. They joined to persecute poor Partridge as the undergraduates at a modern college might join to tease some obnoxious tradesman"; —which is a just comment on the chorus of hilarity

[1] They had insinuated themselves into Partridge's favour, according to Scott, and wrote these absurdities while he looked approvingly over their shoulders. But on the face of it this is absurd.

with which this attack of a kite on a sparrow is usually received.

4

Though meeting Addison and Steele daily, and drinking the health of Ambrose Philips fifty times, Swift's chief work was done out of their company. He was thinking chiefly not of his harsh jest at Partridge's expense, but of the remission of the Tenths and First Fruits in favour of the Church of Ireland, and of the rumour that the notorious and unscrupulous Lord Wharton was going over as Lord-Lieutenant to Ireland with the intention of repealing the Test Act there as a step towards repealing it in England.

It is necessary, therefore, to consider now the political and religious tracts and pamphlets Swift wrote in these years.

Swift's first published work was *Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*. The occasion of it was as follows. In 1698 William III. had made the First Partition Treaty with Louis XIV. on his own responsibility, without asking the opinion of Parliament and against the advice of Lord John Somers, Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal. In order to have a free hand, William, who was in Holland at the time, requested Somers to send him a warrant under the Great Seal for the appointment of Commissioners to decide on the terms of the treaty, leaving blank places for the insertion of what names he, the King, chose. Somers knew that this was unconstitutional, but reluctantly and under protest he obeyed. This was the chief reason why, in April 1700, the King was compelled by the House of Commons to ask for his resignation. In January 1700–1, a new House of Commons with a larger Tory majority met, and almost immediately impeached Somers and two or three other ministers chiefly on this charge. But after

some months of bickering and squabbling with the House of Lords, it acquitted them, and Parliament was prorogued.[1]

Swift's pamphlet appeared anonymously between the prorogation of Parliament and the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession in the autumn of the year. Though it did not affect the debates on the impeachment, it roused great interest, and was thought to be the work of Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, or of Lord Somers himself.

Swift's argument is that in a well-ordered state there is always a balance of power between the commons, the nobles and the rulers. When authority is usurped by any one of them, a tyranny is set up; and considering that the cruelty, revenge, malice and pride, the blindness, obstinacy, ungovernable rage and anger that are to be found in every individual breast, are also to be found in any body of men united by a single purpose, this result is to be dreaded. The populace of Athens banished many of their great leaders—Miltiades, Aristides, Themistocles—and suffered great loss thereby. The turbulence of the Roman Plebs and the extravagance of the claims of their tribunes led to the setting up of the Empire in Rome and the entire subversion of Roman liberty. Sometimes it is said that the quarrels between Cæsar and Pompey were the cause of this. "But no man that sees a flock of vultures hovering over two armies ready to engage, can justly charge the blood drawn in the battle to them, though the carcases fall to their share."

Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome is not one of Swift's greater works. One does not find in it his sustained irony, his hail of gibing sentences, his sardonic laughter. He tackles his subject directly, investing his argument in a blaze of rhetoric. He runs a course and

[1] In June.

breaks a spear clad in the panoply of the pamphleteer of the time. Yet there are some sentences of fiery scorn intensely characteristic of him. For instance: "The raging of the sea, and the madness of the people, are put together in Holy Writ; and it is God alone who can say to either, *Hitherto shalt thou pass, and no farther.*" And again: "He (the party man) has neither opinions, nor thoughts, nor actions, nor talk, that he can call his own, but all conveyed to him by his leader, as wind is through an organ. The nourishment he receives has been not only chewed, but digested, before it comes into his mouth."

The disclosure that Swift was the author drew attention to him. Lord Halifax and Bishop Burnet already had some acquaintance with him as the secretary of Sir William Temple and the editor of his works: now they began to think of him as a writer of promise, who by training and natural sympathy was ready to defend their cause. They encouraged him to converse freely and familiarly with them, so much so that Swift allowed Lord Somers to read *A Tale of a Tub* in manuscript and dedicated it to him in a tone of comic raillery.[1] But they were wrong in supposing that he had definitely cast in his lot with theirs. He was ready to listen to their flattery, and to count on their help in the struggle for promotion. But he had allegiances that he was unwilling to sell on their behalf.

The next great fight the Whigs were engaged in was that over Occasional Conformity. In 1702, 1703 and 1704, the House of Commons passed Bills forbidding Dissenters and other Nonconformists from qualifying for

[1] "I think it a wise piece of presumption to inscribe these papers to your Lordship, and to implore your Lordship's protection of them. God and your Lordship know their faults and their merits." Dedication to Lord John Somers. "A Tale of a Tub," *Works*, vol. i.

office by a merely formal attendance at the services of the Church of England, and fining heavily those who once having attained office by an occasional conformity, began again to attend their own meeting-houses and chapels. So determined were the Commons on this measure that they maintained that the Bills, by reason of the pains and penalties attached to them, were Money Bills, and that it was unconstitutional of the House of Lords to throw them out. Swift, in his bitter, scurrilous way, describes the excitement in London over these measures. He writes in December 1703: "I wish you had been here for ten days, during the highest and warmest reign of party and faction that I ever knew or read of, upon the Bill against Occasional Conformity, which, two days ago, was, upon the first reading, rejected by the Lords. It was so universal that I observed the dogs in the streets much more contumelious and quarrelsome than usual: and the very night before the bill went up, a committee of Whig and Tory cats had a very warm and loud debate upon the roof of our house. But why should we wonder at that, when the very ladies are split asunder into High Church and Low, and out of zeal for religion have hardly time to say their prayers? The masks will have a crown more from any man of the other party, and count it a high point of merit to a member, who will not vote on their side."[1] In this crisis the Whig Lords called on the champion of *Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*. "I was mightily urged by some great people to publish my opinion," he says.[2] He wished to have their favour, but he was reluctant to write a word that would hurt his Church: his experience of Presbyterianism and other forms of dissent had made him a thorough Church of

[1] To William Tisdall, December 16, 1703. *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 38.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 39.

England man. He was in a detestable dilemma; he was angry with himself for not helping those who might help him; but he made no sign to the world. He did, indeed, write a pamphlet against the Bill, but he hesitated so long about printing it that it was too late. The whole affair irritated and disgusted him. "Pox on the Dissenters and Independents! I would as soon trouble my head to write against a louse or a flea. I tell you what: I wrote against the Bill that was against Occasional Conformity; but it came too late by a day, so I would not print it."[1]

It was while in London in 1704 that Swift published anonymously *A Tale of a Tub*, where he does take the trouble to write about a louse and a flea. Why did he publish it at this time? It may have been an attempt to recover the favour and attention he had lost by refusing to help the Whigs in their fight against Occasional Conformity. The Vicar of Laracor and the grandson of the Vicar of Goodrich was unwilling to do anything that would hurt the Church of England or the Church of Ireland; but he had a manuscript by him, which he was sure had genius in it, that dealt with these religious matters in a general way without any reference to the immediate question. Might he not dare to publish it, and burn up his defection in a blaze of reputation? After all it was merely a comic counterpart of Locke's *Letters on Toleration*. Many Church of England men as well as Roman Catholics and Presbyterians would hold up their hands in horror at it, and call it "blue lightning." But Somers would laugh: he was too good a critic not to realize its greatness; he had already told him so. It suited Somers's nature and opinions so well, indeed, that people would perhaps say that it was by him, as they had said that *Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome* was by the Bishop of Salisbury.

[1] To Tisdall, February 3, 1703–4. *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 44.

If such was Swift's reasoning, the reception of *A Tale of a Tub* did not meet his expectations. It stirred a blaze, indeed, but it was too hot for him. He went back to Ireland, and lay low there for three years. When he returned to London in 1707, it was as emissary of the Church of Ireland to ask the Government to remit the First Fruits to the Irish clergy. He was now first and foremost a Church of England man, and set about bitterly attacking its enemies.

It was in the train of the Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Pembroke, who had been commissioned by the Archbishop of Dublin to ask the Queen to remit the First Fruits and Twentieth Parts to the Irish clergy, just as she had remitted them three years before to the clergy of the Church of England, that Swift crossed to England in 1707. He was his chaplain and had been foremost in urging that this request should be made, and it was thought that he would be able to further it through his supposed credit with the Whig Lords, who now controlled the Government. Besides, Lord-Lieutenants have short memories: some one, it was thought, had better be near him to remind him of his undertaking.

Swift was welcomed by the wits and writers. They gave, as I have already said, the author of *A Tale of a Tub* a literary triumph. Lord Somers and Lord Halifax, too, received him kindly, though it is wrong to suppose, as some of his biographers do, that he was ever on so frank and easy a footing with them as he was to be later with Harley and St. John. But they gave him advice about his mission, and led him to believe that they would further his personal promotion. When, in 1708, the Ministry became altogether Whig, when Lord Somers became Lord President of the Council, the Earl of Pembroke Lord High Admiral, Swift was on the point of engaging himself in their service. They urged his

claim to the Bishopric of Waterford. A Prebend of Westminster fell vacant (just the kind of position Swift wanted and the very position King William had promised him many years before), and Lord Halifax offered to solicit it for him. But nothing came of his friends' endeavours. He returned to Ireland in 1709 Vicar of Laracor, as he had come. His suit regarding the First Fruits was equally unsuccessful. Lord Pembroke neglected it. He assured Swift that he need not trouble about it, that he would arrange it with the Queen, that it was under the Queen's consideration, that it was granted; and then, after months of such assurances, Swift discovered that he had done nothing. Acting for himself he had taken counsel with Lord Somers and Lord Halifax, who had arranged a meeting with the Lord Treasurer, Godolphin, for him. But he got no satisfaction out of it. The Lord Treasurer told him that the First Fruits amounted to only about £1200 a year, which was nothing for the Queen to grant, and that they would be granted on two conditions. But one of these was that the Irish clergy would consent to a repeal of the Test Act.

Swift was furious that his credit with the Whig Lords had brought him no greater success. He began to revolve bitter thoughts of vengeance against them, and to rail scornfully at the promises of courtiers. But he had no grounds for indignation. He had done nothing to help the Whigs but write an academic pamphlet in their favour many years before. And all through the months in which he was attending their levees and expecting their assistance, he was anonymously, though not secretly, attacking the policy of toleration that they had decided upon. They wished to repeal the Test Act in Ireland as a preparation to repealing it in England. Swift was determined at all costs to prevent its repeal: no matter what office were offered him, he told Arch-

bishop King, he would not accept it, if it meant deserting his Church. Such an attitude was justifiable and laudable; but he could not fairly expect the Whigs to promote the interests of a man who, with all his satirical genius, was vilifying their schemes.

Swift behaved at this crisis of his life as he did at every other. He was an intense egoist. So long as he was flattered and soothed he purred and arched his back and displayed his graces. But cross him, and the wild cat leapt out: he snarled and spat and tore.

What did Swift's religion amount to? How far was his zeal for the Church ecclesiasticism, and how far the result of religious conviction? In the *Early Lives* there is no material with which to answer these questions, unless the remark of Delany that he entered into orders more from private and fix'd resolution than from absolute choice, and that his caste of mind was more suited for politics than for religion. He seemed to regard the Church as the best outlet to a "settled way of living." He knew that it was a hard road to preferment; that while wit and independence had to languish on ten pounds a year in a remote parish, dullness and servility, by fawning on a great lord, might often reach a bishopric.[1] But no other way was open to him. King William, who had noticed him and talked to him while on a visit to Temple, had offered him a captaincy of horse, and Swift used to say that he wished he had accepted it; but that was in a splenetic mood, for he knew that such an employment would have given no scope to his talents of writing and speaking. He had hoped, he told Delany, that when he went to Laracor, by diligence and constant application and practice, he might have arrived to such a degree of reputation in the Church as that a question might now and then be asked the Sexton on

[1] "Essay on the Fates of Clergymen," *Works*, vol. iii.

Sunday morning, Pray does the Doctor preach to-day? but that then he went to England and filled his head with cursed politics, so that ever after he could not rise higher than *preaching pamphlets*.[1] But all this is irony.

With whatever intentions and aims he entered the Church, in four or five years he became, to appearance at least, the most staunch of churchmen.

His ideas on questions of Church government and doctrine may be gathered from some of the pamphlets he wrote between 1707 and 1710. They are those of a Church of England man who professes to be neither Whig nor Tory. Yet he damns all Whigs as Presbyterians, Atheists, libertines, despisers of religion. His Church in these years was the only party that commanded him.

He is of the opinion that Episcopacy is most agreeable to primitive institutions.[2] There might be some useful alterations of rites and ceremonies, but he sympathizes with the unwillingness of the clergy to allow them. Once alterations are begun there is no limit to them. To give way here would be to act like a man who should pull down and change the ornaments of his house to please every one who found fault as he passed by. He is against taking away the sacramental test. The chief argument for abolishing it is that it deprives many men of the liberty of serving their country. But Papists, Atheists, Mahometans and Jews could plead this as well as Presbyterians and Independents. The general liberty of conscience in Holland is often set before England as a model. Suppose one of the numerous sects in Holland had stirred up civil war, destroyed their government and religion and put their administrators to death, is it likely that even Holland would trust them with great employments?

[1] *Remarks*, Letter 4.

[2] "The Sentiments of a Church of England Man," *Works*, vol. iii. p. 51.

In these opinions Swift stood fast to the end of his life. When, in 1708, the Whigs proposed to repeal the Test Act in Ireland as a preliminary to repealing it in England, he assailed them with bitter irony: "If your little finger be sore, and you think a poultice made of our vitals will give it any ease, speak the word and it shall be done."[1] Many years later, in a sermon on Brotherly Love, he said that no moderate divine could on his conscience affirm it to be safe to allow the "fanatics" toleration. The "fanatic" is perpetually railing against the body of the clergy. "Every opinion in government that differeth in the least from his, tendeth directly to Popery, slavery and rebellion. . . . His devotion consists in drinking gibbets, confusion and damnation; in profanely idolizing the memory of one dead prince, and ungratefully trampling upon the ashes of another."[2]

Swift was not only a Church politician; he was untiring in furthering and defending the interests of the clergy and extending the moral influence of the Church. This appears most clearly in his activities as Dean of St. Patrick's. But in 1708 and in 1709 he already takes this rôle in *A Project for the Advancement of Religion* (1709) and the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* (1708). In both is a sardonic humour and a freedom of irony which in any other than the witty age of Queen Anne would be taken as marks of the scoffer. One of his arguments against abolishing the Church is that it would remove a convenient place for rendezvouses of gallantry, meetings of business and for sleep. He proposes to advance religion by making it fashionable at Court. "How ready would most men be to step into the

[1] "A Letter concerning the Sacramental Test," *Writings on Religion and the Church*, vol. ii. p. 10.

[2] "On Brotherly Love," *Writings on Religion and the Church*, vol. ii. p. 145.

paths of virtue and piety, if they infallibly led to favour and fortune!"

At this time, too (1707-10), Swift came to those conclusions on the doctrines of Christianity which he seemed to believe to the end of his life. He held that there are many mysteries in the Christian faith, and that it is foolish and sinful to puzzle our heads about them; the Scripture, the inspired Word of God, is their warrant and should be sufficient to still our idle questionings. This was a very conservative position to take up. In the claims he made for faith, the author of *A Tale of a Tub* went beyond not only so-called "free-thinkers," but even those moderate divines who gave some weight to the claims of reason.

In the last ten years of the seventeenth century began that discussion of the reasonableness of the Christian Faith which was to last through the first half of the eighteenth. It started with John Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious*. He argues that the same rule is to be applied to the interpretation of Scripture as to other books, and that when this is done there will be found to be no mysteries. Faith is rash presumption or obstinate prejudice if it is not based on knowledge. If the laws of Nature are contradicted—if, for instance, a head which has been severed from the body and the tongue cut out, is said to have spoken—then the miracle is a bit of superstition. But there are no miracles of this kind in the New Testament. "I should read the Gospel a thousand times over," says Toland, "before the vulgar notion of mystery could ever enter my head." We should not be asked to take as matters of faith all the stories introduced when the temples and rites of paganism were adapted in the second, third and fourth centuries to the Christian Worship.

Many thinkers within the Church of England were moving in the direction of *Christianity not Mysterious*—Locke, for instance, and Tillotson and Burnet. They said that reason came to the support of faith: man unaided could not discover the wonders of revelation; but once they were made known, reason helped him to understand them. But when Toland accepted this view and expressed it in an extreme form, they drew back shocked and horrified, and disowned him. They thought him to be ironical in saying there were no mysteries in the New Testament. He seemed to them an infidel making a covert attack on the faith.

Swift would have no dealings with either the timid moderates or with the extremists. He represented their ideas as blasphemies invented by libertines for a wicked end. There are mysteries in the Christian Faith, he says bluntly, which human reason is too limited and too depraved to explain: the doctrine of the Trinity is one, and Peter walking on the water another, and Lazarus rising from the dead another.

Collins, in *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* (1713), went beyond Toland. He claimed the right of free-thought in all matters of religion; and pointed to the contradictions in the interpretation of Scripture and to the confusion in belief and to the superstition which the refusal of free-thinking had caused. Swift, in common with nearly every man of his time, professed abhorrence of his book. It gave him the opportunity to write one of his best pieces of ridicule, his "Abstract of Mr. Collins's Discourse—in plain English for the use of the Poor."

"But without the privilege of free-thinking, how is it possible to know which is the right Scripture? Here are perhaps twenty sorts of Scriptures in the several parts of the world, and every set of priests contend

that their Scripture is the true one. The Indian Brahmins have a book of scripture called the Shaster ; the Persees their Zundivastaw; the Bonzes in China have theirs, written by the disciples of Fo-he, whom they call *God and Saviour of the world, who was born to teach the way of salvation, and to give satisfaction for all men's sins*: which, you see, is directly the same with what our priests pretend of Christ.

". . . Now among all those Scriptures, there cannot above one be right; and how is it possible to know which is that without reading them all, and thinking freely, every one of us for ourselves, without following the advice or instruction of any guide, before we venture to choose? The parliament ought to be at the charge of finding a sufficient number of these Scriptures, for every one of Her Majesty's subjects, for there are twenty to one against us, that we may be in the wrong. But a great deal of free-thinking will at last set us all right, and every one will adhere to the Scripture he likes best; by which means, religion, peace and wealth, will be for ever secured in Her Majesty's realms."[1]

Are Swift's satires against the repeal of the Test Act, and his plea for the preservation of the Church of England as the only defence against heresy and corruption of manners, merely attempts to cover up the black stain of *A Tale of a Tub* and so to promote his worldly advancement? Was Swift really at heart a complete sceptic like the libertine Earl of Rochester of Charles II.'s time? Was he so imbued with the doctrines of his favourite, Lucretius, that he would have been at his ease with the sceptics of the late eighteenth century,

[1] "Mr. C——ns's Discourse of Free-Thinking, Put into plain English, by way of Abstract for the Use of the Poor.—By a Friend of the Author," *Works*, vol. iii. pp. 174–5.

who had shed all religious beliefs? Would he but for ambition have attacked the Church as Voltaire did?

To answer Yes to any of these questions is impossible. There is one poem, indeed, which might deceive us into a different answer to some of them—"The Day of Judgment." But it does not express a settled conviction; it is not a cynic's view of God and the universe, but a fierce satirical outburst against the wickedness of men.

Had he not stuck to the Church in 1699, had he chosen a career in the world, there is no saying to what lengths his bitterness of spirit, his uncompromising nature and mordant criticism would have carried him in scepticism. The seeds of it are present. But he sealed the chamber where they lay and never let the light enter to them. Except in the "Day of Judgment" and in his account of the Dutch sailors in Laputa to whom Christianity had taught refinements of cruelty, there is no "free-thinking" in his satire after *A Tale of a Tub*. And this silence must be deliberate; for in the Imaginary Voyages on which *Gulliver's Travels* is modelled, religion is the subject turned to most readily and discussed most freely.

In keeping silent about religion he did no violence to himself. He was practical, not speculative. His feet were planted on right earth. To go flying up to the stars and arraigning the constitution of things seemed the folly of follies to him. Yet it is little wonder that he who so often spoke of man with unmeasurable contempt, should sometimes have been supposed to include his Maker in it.

CHAPTER V

English Politics (1710–1714)

The last four years of Queen Anne's reign are the most brilliant episode of Swift's life: in them he shone among his equals and helped to frame the policies of his country. But in no way is it his most important period. He helped Oxford and Bolingbroke to carry through the Treaty of Utrecht; but they would have done this without him, and he did not exercise a shaping influence on their counsels. The final stroke of his politics—his little politics, he humbly confessed them to be—his effort to keep them from quarrelling, was a failure. During these four years he wrote several able journalistic tracts and one or two masterpieces of wit; but from the point of view of literature the chief thing was not the actual production but the ingathering of those ideas and that experience which went to the making of *Gulliver's Travels*.

I

The day Swift arrived in London in September 1710 he began the series of letters known as the *Journal to Stella*, which he continued to write till, in 1713, he left England to be consecrated Dean of St. Patrick's. His habit was to write—sometimes in the morning before getting out of bed, sometimes in the evening, sometimes both morning and evening—a day-to-day account of his doings and intentions. This he dispatched every fortnight or so, beginning a new letter while the finished

one lay still beside him sealed for the post. Much that he wrote was personal—sentences in the little language in which Stella and he expressed their affection: advice to her to take long walks for her health (Spend pattens and spare potions, wear out clogs and waste claret); jests about the green apron he has been commissioned to buy for her, which has cost him plaguy dear, for he was told that English silk would cockle and so he got Italian. Or he sets down the odds and ends that have amused him during the day: the mouse which he cannot catch, warming itself beneath the fender; the comedy of the two lame old fellows entering a brandy-shop and complimenting each other as to who should go first; the madman who accosted him on the way home from dinner with Prior and told him that he had two hundred thousand men ready to serve the Queen in war. Or he gives a minute account of the political situation: how the Emperor "has come with his two eggs a penny" and promised wonders if England will continue the war; how Harley and St. John take things as easily and merrily as if there were nothing on their hearts and shoulders; how that now that the Duke of Marlborough is deposed from all his offices he is afraid of what may happen in Europe. "Opinion is a mighty matter in war, and I doubt the French think it impossible to conquer an army that he leads, and our soldiers think the same; and how far even this step may encourage the French to play tricks with us, no man knows. I do not love to see personal resentment mix with public affairs."[1]

On his arrival in London he found everything upside down. Godolphin had been rudely told to break his Treasurer's staff; Marlborough's prestige was waning; Robert Harley had become head of a majority of Tory High-Fliers; and the Whigs, among them Steele the

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 310.

Gazetteer, were daily expecting to be turned out of office. One can follow closely the changes in Swift's outlook during his first weeks in London. His intention was, he writes, to transact his business of the First Fruits and to return to Dublin and the willows of Laracor as quickly as possible. But he found himself a marked man: almost immediately poems and lampoons were ascribed to him that he had not written. He became bitter against the Whigs for not having made some provision for him. "Everybody asks how I come to be so long in Ireland, as naturally as if here were my being; but no soul offers to make it so."[1] He treated their apologies with contempt and "almost vowed revenge." One night in the company of a discontented Whig he talked treason heartily, rolling resentments in his mind for an hour and a half. Yet he still kept company with his Whig literary friends. He wrote a letter for the *Tatler* on the corruptions of the English language, and dined often with Addison and Steele. But his glee at the downfall of the "cunning" Whigs could not be kept within his own breast: he was ready to become their open enemy. Robert Harley, who had a genius for discovering literary men, soon learned that the greatest droll in Europe was discontented enough to leave his practical jests and help him in his schemes of empire.[2] They met for the first time on October 7: and in two hours the magic of that voice which, while saying nothing, seemed to hold forth golden prospects, charmed Swift into a new allegiance. "Mr. Harley came out to me, brought me in, and presented me to his son-in-law, Lord Doblane (or some such name), and his own son, and among others, Will Penn, the Quaker: we sat two hours drinking as good wine as you do; and two hours more he and I alone; where he heard me tell my business;

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 5. [2] *The Englishman*, vol. ii. p. 103.

entered into it with all kindness; asked for my powers and read them; and read likewise a memorial I had drawn up, and put it in his pocket to show the Queen; told me the measures he would take; and in short, said everything I could wish; told me he must bring Mr. St. John (Secretary of State) and me acquainted; and spoke so many things of personal kindness and esteem for me, that I am inclined half to believe what some friends have told me, that he would do everything to bring me over. He has desired to dine with me (what a comical mistake was that) I mean, he has desired me to dine with him on Tuesday; and after four hours being with him, set me down at St. James's Coffeehouse in a hackney coach. All this is odd and comical if you consider him and me. He knew my Christian name very well."[1]

A few days later Harley had the reward of his affability in the lampoon, *Sid Hamet's Rod*—Sid Hamet being the Earl of Godolphin, who had suddenly and rudely been told to give up his Treasurer's staff.

> The rod of Hermes was renown'd
> For charms above and under ground;
> To sleep could mortal eyelids fix,
> And drive departed souls to Styx.
> That rod was a just type of Sid's,
> Which o'er a British senate's lids
> Could scatter opium full as well,
> And drive as many souls to hell.
> Sid's rod was slender, white and tall,
> Which oft he used to fish withal;
> A Plaice was fasten'd to the hook
> And many score of *gudgeons* took;
> Yet still so happy was his fate,
> He caught his fish and sav'd his bait.[2]

This, no doubt, satisfied Harley: it was, besides, adequate vengeance for the contemptuous superiority

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 23. [2] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 134.

with which "Sid" had treated Swift's petition two years before.

Swift was elated by the eminence to which his friendship with Harley raised him. He knew that his professions of friendship would have little material result. "They call me nothing but Jonathan; and I said I believed they would leave me Jonathan, as they found me; and that I never knew a ministry do anything for those whom they make the companions of their pleasures; and I believe you will find it so; but I care not." But he was as pleased to be made much of as a child with a new toy; and just like a child he did not understand why every one should not share his delight. One cause of dissatisfaction was that Addison never bore himself quite so friendly to him after his desertion to the Tories. Addison and he seldom meet now, he writes; and when they do, Addison is dry and cold and yet he has taken more pains to recommend the Whig wits to the Government than any other people. "A curse of party!" "Rot politics!"

He had days of low spirits when things seemed to be going all wrong, when Harley had vexed him by his procrastination or a rumour had gone round the town that the Whig Lord Somers had been summoned to the Queen. He was cruelly hurt when Harley treated him like a hired writer and sent him fifty pounds; and when St. John forgot he was a friend and behaved moodily to him like a great man to one of his servants. Illness, too, sometimes caused him to be downcast. He once or twice suffered from giddiness and had to take Dr. Cockburn's pills and other medicines prescribed by Ladies and Countesses. He was always fearful of his health when he sweated too much. And sometimes the memory of Laracor and the company of Hester Johnson completely blotted out the immediate pleasure of a

dinner at Mrs. Vanhomrigh's or of dictating to the Brothers' Club or of providing for little Harrison, the poet. But in the main in these London years he was as proud as a cock ruffling its plumes on a spring morning. To put a man in a position on the recommendation of a friend's friend, to whisper to the Lord Treasurer at his levee, to protest gravely against a duke being made a member of his club, to confer at an Assembly with a duchess behind her fan, or to allow his hat to be snatched from his head by a countess and cast down on the railings—in such a world he could be tolerably happy.

2

A change in the Queen's Government had been slowly engineered in the summer months of 1710. In May the Duke of Shrewsbury took the place of the Marquis of Kent; in August the master of the puppets, Harley himself, stepped forth as Chancellor of the Exchequer and chief of the Commission that held the Treasury. His intention was to make a "moderate" Government. But the elections of 1710 encumbered him with so large a High-Flier majority in the House of Commons that he found himself called upon to strike home, give the Whigs their *coup de grâce*, carry a straight rein and make the Government formidable. The brilliant young statesman, Henry St. John, leader of the high hot people that wanted things done, became in September one of the Secretaries of State. Never were yoked two leaders so unfitted to draw together.

The rising of the mob in favour of the vulgar renegade Sacheverell had carried the Tories into power. The Whigs had impeached him for calling them names, for denouncing toleration and liberty of conscience as Perils of False Brethren, and for declaring that the Church was in danger; and by their act had put themselves in

the position of appearing enemies of the Church. But behind the violent national madness caused by the trial of Sacheverell, there was a discontent that had been growing in volume for four years, at the prolongation of the war. Harley and St. John therefore set themselves to end it. This was no easy task. The Whigs had still a majority in the House of Lords, which was determined on no peace so long as a Bourbon ruled over Spain. It stoutly held out for impossible terms: one of them being that Louis XIV. should not only disown Philip his nephew, who during the course of the war had won the bulk of the Spanish people to his side and established himself as King, but that he should in addition send troops to drive him from the country.

Peace negotiations were first openly proposed in the speech Queen Anne made at the opening of Parliament on December 7, 1711. She said that the time had come when a wise ruler must rebuke those who take pleasure in war, and that she would endeavour through peace to extend the trade and improve the prosperity of her people. An amendment was moved and carried in the House of Lords that no peace would be satisfactory so long as a Bourbon held Spain or the Spanish Indies. The debate was extremely bitter. For one thing the Earl of Nottingham, who usually voted with the Tories, now, in return for Whig support of a Bill against Occasional Conformity,[1] put forward the amendment. For another, Queen Anne, who remained in the House "to moderate the Heats of the Debates," seemed to show by an appearance of friendliness to the Whig Duke of Somerset that she, like Nottingham, had deserted the ministry. Harley got out of the difficulty with much cunning and cleverness. A day or two after the high dispute on No Peace

[1] "A Bill for preserving the Protestant Religion by better securing the Church of England."

without Spain, another fierce debate took place on a matter that interested the Queen so intensely that she again was present in the House of Lords: whether the Duke of Hamilton, one of the Scottish Peers and newly raised to a British peerage, the Dukedom of Brandon, had a right to take his place in both capacities. The question was answered in the negative. This was taken as an affront to the Queen, and in order to redress it, Harley boldly created twelve new peers: which asserted the Queen's authority and won her good graces, and while giving Harley the strength he needed to go on with negotiations for peace, shielded him from the charge that he had obtained a majority simply to carry out his own will.

The eagerness with which the result of the debate of December 7 was awaited, the anger and chagrin of Swift and his friends at their apparent defeat, their very looks and gestures when they met Harley and the jests with which they tempered their bitterness, are recorded in the *Journal to Stella*.

"I dined with Mr. Cockburn, and after, a Scotch member came in and told us that the clause was carried against the court in the House of Lords almost two to one. I went immediately to Mrs. Masham, and meeting Dr. Arbuthnot (the Queen's favourite physician) we went together. She was just come from waiting at the Queen's dinner, and going to her own. She had heard nothing of the thing being gone against us. It seems Lord Treasurer had been so negligent, that he was with the Queen while the question was put in the House: I immediately told Mrs. Masham that either she and the Lord Treasurer had joined with the Queen to betray us, or that they two were betrayed by the Queen: she protested solemnly it was not the former, and I believed her; but she gave me some lights to suspect the Queen

is changed. For, yesterday, when the Queen was going from the House, where she sat to hear the debate, the Duke of Shrewsbury, Lord Chamberlain, asked her, whether he or the Great Chamberlain, Lindsay, ought to lead her out; she answered short, Neither of you, and gave her hand to the Duke of Somerset, who was louder than any in the House for the clause against peace. . . . Mr. Masham begged us to stay, because Lord Treasurer would call, and we were resolved to fall on him about his negligence in securing a majority. He came and appeared in good humour as usual, but I thought his countenance was much cast down. I rallied him, and desired him to give me his staff, which he did; I told him, if he would secure it me a week, I would set all right: he asked, How? I said I would immediately turn Lord Marlborough, his two daughters, the Duke and Duchess of Somerset, and Lord Cholmondely, out of all their employments; and I believe he had not a friend but was of my opinion. . . . This is all your d——d Duchess of Somerset's doings. I warned them of it nine months ago and a hundred times since; the Secretary always dreaded it. I told Lord Treasurer I should have the advantage of him; for he would lose his head, and I should only be hanged, and so carry my body entire to the grave."[1]

After the victory obtained by the creation of the twelve new peers the Government called the conference that drafted the Treaty of Utrecht. All the time it sat the Whigs denounced it for giving away the fruits of victory; and linked with this the charge that in not pushing the war to a complete defeat of the French, the Government was endangering the Protestant Succession. The opposition of George Ludwig, Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I., to the negotiations at Utrecht, gave weight to their arguments.

[1] *Journal to Stella*, pp. 295–7.

The Treaty of Utrecht was signed in April 1713. Sixteen months later Queen Anne died. St. John, now Viscount Bolingbroke and the Duke of Ormond, fled to France. Harley, Earl of Oxford, was imprisoned in the Tower. To Swift it seemed like a dream that a Government put into power with so much unanimity should so easily have been disrupted. It is incredible to him, he says in 1715, that of the three ministers with whom he was conversant in 1710, two should be attainted fugitives and the third under trial for high treason.

But there was nothing marvellous about it. Apart from the making of the Treaty of Utrecht the Tories had no policy. Bolingbroke was ready to risk bringing over the Pretender. Harley knew that this would mean civil war and held back and temporized. If he had been strong enough he would have formed a party of moderates, entered into close relations with the Hanoverians and himself welcomed George I. Actually he almost carried through his idea. But his followers were too unruly for him and the opposition too virulent; and his habit of secrecy and carrying all the threads of an intrigue in his own brain, deprived him of the support of even his own friends. Swift, for instance, did not understand him; he saw the procrastinator and temporizer, but did not realize how able a schemer they concealed. Had he given the full force of his political support to Oxford rather than to his rival, things might have been different.

During the four years of the last ministry of Queen Anne, Swift was the leader of the band of writers that defended its policy. He wrote hard upon one another, poems, pamphlets and lampoons; and he directed the activities of a number of "under-spur-leathers." It is necessary to define as exactly as possible the extent and nature of his assistance.

He was on the most intimate terms with Robert

Harley and Henry St. John. He dined regularly with the one on Saturday nights and with the other on Sundays. What freedoms he took with them, how great was his love for the one and his admiration of the other, the *Journal* reveals. Yet he was not allowed into their inmost counsels. He was not told beforehand how Harley intended to get over the adverse vote of the House of Lords in the great debate on *No peace without Spain* in December 1711. No sooner were Harley and St. John in power than they began secret negotiations with France; but Swift to his chagrin knew nothing of them till the chance arrest of their emissary, Matthew Prior, by the customs officers at Dover, let out the secret. Bolingbroke was steering a bold and direct course towards the establishment of another Stuart Government: Swift had so little knowledge of his dealings with the Pretender that to the end of his life he denied their existence. He was given just enough information to enable him to defend their policies when they were ripe for publication. The lack of harmony between the two ministers made any other political relationship impossible. They distrusted each other: how could they fully confide in the man who stood between them? Further, Harley's method of governing was to give an impression of power by involving everything in mystery, to give hints of what he seemed to intend, then to follow another course through many retrogressions and windings: he hoped to win his ends by holding men in hand.

Swift made many desperate efforts to keep them together. As early as January 1711, he says that personal quarrels mingled too much with their proceedings; and he chides them for being easy and merry in the face of misfortunes, "like physicians, who endeavour to cure, but feel no grief whatever the patient suffers." In the following summer dissensions broke out which threatened

to sink the "rotten ship." "Do you know," he writes, "that I have ventured all my credit with these great ministers to clear some misunderstandings between them; and, if there be no breach, I ought to have the merit of it? 'Tis a plaguy ticklish piece of work, and a man hazards losing both sides. 'Tis a pity the world does not know my virtue." From this time onwards the differences between them are his greatest anxiety. He risks all to reconcile them, though the attempt will bring him neither honour nor praise, and though he is weary of the whole business. "I am again endeavouring," he says a year later, "as I was last year, to keep people from breaking to pieces upon a hundred misunderstandings. One cannot withhold them from drawing different ways, while the enemy is watching to destroy both."

3

Swift's first task was to advocate peace with France. He did not undertake it out of any passionate or long-pondered conviction. Even the arguments that form the basis of his tracts, were not his own. He points out that everything for which the war was fought, had been won; that it was now to the interest of both France and Spain that their crowns should not be united, and that Holland had been given a sufficient Barrier against the French. But these ideas were first put forward by St. John in a pamphlet addressed to the Tory news-sheet, the *Examiner*, before Swift had undertaken to write for it.

"To restore the Spanish Monarchy to the House of Austria, who by their own Supineness, and by the Perfidy of the French, had lost it; and to regain a Barrier for Holland, which lay naked and open to the insults of France; were the wise and generous Motives which

engaged Britain in the present War. We engaged as Confederates but we have been made to proceed as Principals: Principals in expense of Blood and Treasure, whilst hardly a Second Place in Respect and Dignity is allow'd to us.

"In the Year 1706, the last of these two Motives was effectually answer'd by the Reduction of the Netherlands. . . .

"From that Point of Time to this Hour, France has continu'd like a great Town invested indeed on every Part, but attack'd only in one. In Spain, in Savoy, on the Rhine, enough, and just enough, has been done to serve as Pretence for Estimates and Demands of Supplies: But nothing decisive, nothing which had the appearance of Earnest, has been so much as attempted, except that wise expedition to Thoulon, which we suffer'd to be defeated, before it began. The whole stress of the war has been wantonly laid, where France is best able to keep us at bay; as if we fought only to make Ostentation of our Valour and of our Riches. Towns have been taken, and Battles have been won; the Mob has huzza'd round bonfires; the Stentor of the Chapel has strain'd his Throat in the Gallery, and the Stentor of S——m[1] has defeated his Audience from the Pulpit."[2]

It does not come within the bounds of this study to discuss at length the truth of this argument. The Whig historians have in the main led their readers to believe that the disregard of Harley and St. John for the glory of British arms, their dismissal of Marlborough, and their order to his successor, the Duke of Ormond, not to co-operate with Prince Eugene in the taking of Denain,

[1] Burnet, the Whig Bishop of Salisbury.

[2] *A Fourth Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, vol. iv. 1751, p. 1 (Lord Somers's *Tracts*, vol. xvi.).

were mean and shameful actions inspired by personal and party motives. Every Whig pamphleteer for twenty years after the Treaty of Utrecht attacked them bitterly for throwing away the fruits of greater victories than the world had ever known. Yet an answer to St. John's argument is difficult to find. The Emperor was determined on winning Spain—an impossible feat: very little progress was being made in Flanders, the scene of the victorious battles; neither the Dutch nor the Emperor was contributing a fair share of arms and money: England was running millions into debt in order to carry on the war.[1] Faced by the selfish obstinacy of her allies was she not justified in making advances that would lead to peace? And when enthusiastic Whigs[2] identified England's greatness with the genius of Marlborough, was it not time to conclude that they had put military glory above all other considerations?

Swift, in accepting St. John's ideas and arguments, was not insincere. Up to his coming to London in 1710

[1] For a full statement of the argument, see the "Account of the State of the Several Treaties of Peace, between Her Majesty and her Allies, and France and Spain, with an Account of the Obstructions Her Majesty has met with in her Endeavours to make the same universal and complete." Chandler's *Proceedings of the House of Commons*, 1742, vol. v. p. 207.

See also a letter of Bolingbroke of October 9, 1711, to Mr. Harrison (Swift's "little Harrison"), secretary to the Embassy at The Hague. If he hears the Queen's resolution to make peace, censured, he must, writes Bolingbroke, speak out. "The Queen has supported a ten years' war, wherein her interests were at most remotely concerned, with all the vigour of a principal, and with all the sacrifices which might be expected from a frontier state, from a prince who fought *pro aris et focis*: the burden has every year been increased without proportion upon her. She finds, at last, her kingdoms no longer able to continue under such pressures: she thinks, therefore, that she is obliged, in justice even to the allies, to declare that it is time to conclude a peace."

[2] The *Tatler*, No. 5.

all his associations had been with the Whigs, and perhaps, if they had managed him better, he would have remained with them. Yet it was not merely wounded pride and the bait of a few promises that won him over. He ardently supported the Church policy of the Tories: they had not proposed to repeal the Test Acts; they, like himself, damned Dissent to the company of fanaticism and free-thinking. Besides, his cast of mind made him their natural ally: he opposed all changes with a violence and obstinacy that remind one of a Tory Squire or High-Flying Jacobite—the new learning of Bentley and his kind, the new criticism of religion to which the philosophers were turning, the new economics that dared to put commerce with countries beyond the sea on a level with the land as a source of wealth. Finally, he was ready to fall in with any party that opposed war. Many people considered the project of carrying on the war till Philip was driven from Spain quixotic: Swift not only agreed with them; he thought all wars—except those in defence of one's country—proofs that men are the toys of ugly and sordid passions. The author of *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels* looked on military glory with a disillusioned and cynical eye.

Swift's pamphlets had a tremendous influence. They created and confirmed the public opinion that was behind Harley and St. John in concluding the Treaty of Utrecht. But they are political tracts, not little books which, thrice read, will make one wise in affairs of state. They contain much shrewd comment on the political situation. Swift, too, was so near the heart of things that he can describe to the life the passions by which men were tossed about. Yet they are essentially essays in what Swift himself called the Art of Political Lying, not the works of a great statesman or great political philosopher. It is not by arguments of the truth of which

he himself is convinced that he carries the day, but by clever innuendo, plausible statement and audacious suppression of fact. "To endeavour to work upon the Vulgar with fine Sense," he says, " is like attempting to hew Blocks with a razor."[1]

Swift's first big task was to take over the writing of the *Examiner*, a weekly sheet started in August 1710, to support Harley and his friends. He wrote it for eight months. In it he declares that the Whigs have no respect for the Queen, that they despise the landed gentry, and that they are the natural allies of atheists and free-thinkers. He assumes that the war has been advantageous only to Marlborough and his friends, and that they have richly lined their pockets by it. He draws pictures of Harley and St. John in shining garments and sets them against pictures of the Earl of Godolphin and Lord Wharton stained with all kinds of meannesses and abominations. And he carries through his violent partisan attacks with a grave judicial authoritative air, as if he were a moderate desiring to hold the scales fairly and to think only of the good of the nation.

In No. 26 he describes a dispute in a coffee-house between Whigs and Tories. A knot of discontented gentlemen are cursing the Tories to Hell for their design to bring in Popery and the Pretender: some warm young people take up the challenge and maintain that if the Whigs had remained in power, neither Church nor Monarchy would have been left. The *Examiner* agrees with these "warm young people": he defies the "knot of discontented gentlemen" to give any ground for their uncharitable opinion; yet he thinks that "these warm young people" have rather overstated their case. It is not at all likely that the late Whig Government would

[1] "Thoughts on Various Subjects," *Miscellanies*, 1747, vol. ii. p. 253.

have been able to accomplish another revolution and destroy Monarchy and Church. "It is natural indeed, when a storm is over, that has only untiled our houses and blown down some of our chimneys, to consider what further mischiefs might have ensued, if it had lasted longer. However, in the present case, I am not of the opinion above-mentioned; I believe the Church and State might have lasted somewhat longer, though the late enemies to both had done their worst: I can hardly conceive how things would have been so soon ripe for a new revolution."

He then ironically gives a list of the bills and resolutions the Whigs had intended to introduce: Ordered, That a Bill be brought in for removing the education of youth out of the hands of the Clergy. Another, to forbid the Clergy preaching certain duties in religion, especially obedience to Princes. Another, to take away the jurisdiction of Bishops. Another, for constituting a General for life; with instructions to the committee, that care may be taken to make the war last as long as the life of the said General.

One of his devices is to insinuate that his opponents are guilty of some monstrous crime, refuse to dwell on it, and proceed immediately to demonstrate in form some lesser error or defect. But the first insinuation sticks; and like a knowing nod or gesture that indicates deeper infamy than that described by word, it blackens the whole case: we come to it in an atmosphere of gloom, and wherever we turn our eyes, are thickening shades. "Falsehood flies, and Truth comes limping after it; so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late, the jest is over; and the tale has had its effect."

He begins No. 36 by declaring the Whigs to be a faction, a conglomerate party, to whom the monarch should show no indulgence, composed of Papists,

Socinians, Freethinkers, Deists; those who are in favour of a Venetian state, those who desire a Dutch Republic, those who support an aristocracy. But he refuses to press home this charge. To condemn them it is sufficient to point to what they themselves openly profess—their disrespect for crowned heads, their desire to clip the royal prerogative, their preference of the moneyed to the landed interest, their belief that union in Church discipline and doctrine is foppery, cant and priestcraft. In another paper he distinguishes between the avarice of Catiline *alieni appetens, sui profusus*, and that of Crassus, an endless desire of hoarding. The first, because it mingles well with ambition, is the more dangerous to the state. The second, the lesser vice and the more curable, is Marlborough's; and the *Examiner* writes him a letter urging him to get rid of it. By conceding that he is not a Catiline, only a Crassus, he assumes an air of righteous moderation.

It is the contrast between his grave and serious air and the vivacity and ingenuity of his wit that makes these papers provocative of laughter still. The *Examiner* is no scurrilous rough-and-tumble Bartholomew Fair clown. He comes out on a stage that is set fair and well for a serious controversy. But he has a thousand devils in attendance, and while he speaks without a quiver of laughter, they interpret his words with mocking dances, with jeering and scoffing looks. He enters with apparent seriousness into a studied comparison of the rewards given to Marlborough with those given to a Roman general. Marlborough in a Bill of British Gratitude has received pictures and jewels worth £60,000; the Roman general in a Bill of Roman Gratitude received a thousand copper medals of the value of a half-penny each, which amounts to £2, 1s. 8d. Marlborough has received in all £540,000; the Roman general received

£994, 11s. 10d. But of his rewards only two were of real profit to him: the laurel crown, made at the expense of the public, and the embroidered garment. And, adds Swift, "I cannot find whether this last were paid for by the senate or the general."[1]

The Conduct of the Allies was written in October and November of 1711, and published just before the great debate in the House of Lords on December 7, as to whether there should be peace with France so long as a Bourbon sat on the throne of Spain. Five editions were immediately sold out: Swift says that all the arguments used by the Tories were taken from it. Perhaps no other single pamphlet has had so much influence in shaping political action in England. But it is not his best work. He has less scope for his characteristic irony than in *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* and in the *Drapier's Letters*. The material regarding foreign treaties weighs heavily on him, and it is only when dealing with the main argument that his eloquence becomes like a razor whetted with oil.

He demands peace. He charges the Whigs as answerable to God, their Country and Posterity with not esteeming the bleeding condition of their Fellow-countrymen as a Feather in the Balance with their private ends. He declares that England must no longer be the dupe and bubble of Europe and that it is time to drive the money-changers from the Temple and overthrow their tables. He has reason on his side when he pleads that everything has been gained for which the war had been fought; that Louis had offered during the interrupted negotiations of 1709 all that he could without humiliating his country; that to press him further, to ask him, for instance, as a guarantee of good faith, to drive his nephew from the throne of Spain by

[1] *Works*, vol. ix. p. 97.

force of arms, would arouse a heroic spirit in France that many years of warfare would not beat down. He has some grounds for declaring that the war was not *pro aris et focis*, that England was not a principal ally, that if a man's house goes on fire the onus of putting it out rests in the first place on himself, and only in the second place on those neighbours who run with their buckets to help him. He may be excused for supposing that the whole burden of the war will fall on the landed interest and that, fifty or sixty years after, a few rotting flags would be no compensation for the poverty their grandchildren laboured under; for such an opinion, though it is blind to the advantages that commerce and extended colonial dominions bring, was common at that time. But he goes far beyond these claims and arguments in his demand for peace. He declares that the whole war from the beginning to the end has been a dreadful calamity. "But the common question is, If we must now surrender Spain, what have we been fighting for all this while? The answer is ready: We have been fighting for the ruin of the public interest and the advancement of the private. We have been fighting to raise the wealth and grandeur of a particular family, to enrich usurers and stockjobbers; and to cultivate the pernicious designs of a faction by destroying the landed interest."[1]

It is true that in 1700 the English people were unwilling to take part in a European war. But Louis XIV. made two moves which allowed William III. to conclude the Grand Alliance with the full assent of the English people: he occupied the chief towns of the Spanish Netherlands, and recognized the son of James II. as King of England. The war which followed was inevitable. Swift declares that on the accession of Queen Anne it

[1] "The Conduct of the Allies," *Works*, vol. v. p. 116.

would have ended in a few months, if Godolphin and Marlborough had not hoped to gain by it. "The Treasurer's staff was ready for his lordship, the Duke was to command the army, and the Duchess by her employments and the favour she was possessed of, to be always nearest Her Majesty's person: by which the whole power, at home and abroad, would be devolved upon that family. This was a prospect so very inviting, that, to confess the truth, it could not be easily withstood by any who have so keen an appetite for wealth or power."[1]

The war brought great glory to England. One victory followed another; and in consequence, for six years at least, the feeling in favour of it did not abate, and no one dreamt of challenging the justice of the cause. Swift counts all this disaster and puts the blame of it on Marlborough. There would have been no war if he had not been given the chief command. His ambition forced the country to increase the quota of its troops beyond what it had agreed to. He prolonged it, for he had no desire to see it end, so long as he could obtain perquisites and presents. Had he not been supreme, the naval effort would have been far greater; for his ability being on land he was envious of any attention given to sea-warfare. And after all, he insinuates, his boasted military reputation was no such marvel. It had been won at a tremendous cost. Any soldier can take a town if he is willing to pay the price: if he counts upon sacrificing so much blood and treasure, the rest is all a regular, established method, which cannot fail.

This is a farcical travesty. The avarice and ambition of Marlborough did not drum England into war. It is ludicrous to suggest that if Louis XIV. had been less regardful of the lives of his men, he would have won as

[1] "The Conduct of the Allies," *Works*, vol. v. p. 98.

many battles and taken as many towns as Marlborough. Yet the arguments are marshalled with so much cunning and set forth with so much eloquence that it swept the Tories into enthusiastic assent. He lays hold of all the grumbles of the preceding ten years, masses them together and applies them to the whole period. In 1703 Lord Haversham in the House of Lords had protested against the Extraordinary Favour of one or two persons, and against all power by Sea and Land being in one Hand and all offices like a set of Locks commanded by a master-key. In 1705 he had said that England was bearing the brunt of the war, that her allies were as slow and backward as she was zealous and forward, that they came into the field when she was going into winter quarters. But he supported the war though he grumbled at the conduct of it, and did not deny Marlborough's greatness. "Those who command your army, are men of that bravery, and every common soldier hath so much courage that no equal number of men in the world can stand before them."[1] *The Conduct of the Allies* is a masterpiece in the Art of Political Lying.

All Swift's political pamphlets are crammed with audacious scornful assertions, plausible half-arguments and cunning malicious insinuations. He declared the *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, which he wrote with assiduity and loving care in 1713 and 1714, to be a truthful account of that period. He said that it was a work intended for posterity and refused to mingle with it panegyric and satire, since facts truly related are "the best applauses or most lasting censures." But even his friends were abashed and frightened by its monstrous perversions of truth, and united to prevent its publication. Prince Eugene, he hints, plotted to have Harley

[1] *Memoirs of the Late Right Honourable Lord John Haversham. From the year* 1640 *to* 1710. London, 1711. Speech of 1703.

murdered *à la négligence*; and organized the Mohawks that it might appear their deed: Marlborough, he says, intended by a procession on Queen Elizabeth's Day, on which the Pope's effigy was burned, to create a disturbance so great that under cover of it he might make himself King. Of the Earl of Nottingham he writes: "His outward regularity of life, his appearance of religion, and seeming zeal for the Church, as they are an effect, so they are the excuse for that stiffness and formality with which his nature is fraught. His adust complexion disposeth him to rigour and severity, which his admirers palliate with the name of zeal. No man had ever a sincerer countenance, or more truly representing his mind and manners. He hath some knowledge in the law, very amply sufficient to defend his property at least. A facility of utterance, descended to him from his father, and improved by a few sprinklings of literature, hath brought himself and some few admirers into an opinion of his eloquence."[1] The word "attack" comes to one's lips when speaking of satire; by which, when Swift is in question, must be understood not only the brilliant sword-play of a Sergeant Troy, but all the art of poison, dagger and stiletto which one reads of in Jacobean drama.

4

In the first session of the Parliament of 1710 a club was formed by a number of members called the October Club, its object being to put forward proposals that would "tend directly to the Honour and Advantage of the Queen and Kingdom and to the Improvement of Virtue, Learning and Good Manners." It allowed no horrid oaths or obscene discourses in its midst; declared

[1] *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen* (first printed 1758), p. 24.

that the new invented distinctions of High, Low and Moderate Churchmen were deceitful amusements contrived to disunite the people; but while paying regard to scrupulous consciences, desired that Toleration should be limited so as not to give protection to fanatics and atheists. It professed high ideals, but its enemies said that it was merely a club of Tory fox-hunting squires, who were determined to keep the Government up to the scratch; and they made much sport with their supposed ignorance and simplicity. "A Pox of your motion about consider," De Foe makes one of its members say, in a discussion on a proposal to consider what materials there were for an impeachment of some of the late ministers: "I was always an Enemy to considering. I'll justify it that considering has done more harm and spoil'd more good Designs, than any other action in the World; have we not carried all our points without considering?"

The club soon became disorganized, but towards the end of 1711 discontent with the Government drew its members together again. It had been almost a year in office, yet the war dragged on and many Whigs had not forfeited their posts. Swift, in January 1712, had a pamphlet printed counselling them not to break the unity of their party.[1] He treats the October Club as if it were a mad dog that needed soothing. To begin with he does not censure or criticize, but praises the idea of a club where discussion is untrammelled by business. Every precaution must be taken against the wiles and intrigues of the Whigs. They have managed to get the ear of the Queen through the Duchess of Somerset. It is not safe to count upon the weakness of any man's understanding, for the weakest invention is sharpened by the spirit of revenge. It is only after spurning at the

[1] *The Secret History of the October Club*, 1711, pt. 2, p. 22.

enemies of the October Club that he ventures to give it advice. But even then his tone is mild. His satirical hits at their expense are gentle as compared with the virulence of his attacks on their enemies. The Whigs, he says, for instance, were, when in power, more zealous for their party than the Tories are now. He thus suggests to the October Club the danger of disunity and too censorious an attitude to the Government. But he adds immediately that he cannot commend the Whigs for their zeal, for it is natural for mankind to be more zealous in a bad cause than in a good.

One of the pamphlets written in these years stands by itself for its lightness and gaiety—"A New Journey to Paris." In it he diverted attention from an incident that caused the Government much annoyance. In June 1711 Matthew Prior was sent over to Paris to further the negotiations for peace which Harley and St. John had set on foot. On his return journey in the company of two French emissaries, the Abbé Gaultier and M. Mesnager, he was stopped at Deal and made prisoner by a zealous official, Mr. Macky, Master of the Packet-Boats, and not released till the arrival of a personal order from St. John. This was unfortunate for the Government, for its negotiations with France were still a secret both from its own people and their allies. The news of the capture reached London, and some officious person sent a letter about it to Holland. St. John was in a quandary, whether he should disown Prior or boldly allow it to be believed that negotiations were under weigh. It must be remembered that there was a strong and influential body of moderates, headed by the Duke of Shrewsbury, who distrusted St. John's intentions in hurrying on a peace with France. A means of allaying their fears occurred to Swift. He admitted that negotiations had taken place, but by working on race prejudice

and national pride he made those who censured them look ridiculous. He wrote a tract, which he pretended to be the narrative of the Frenchman, the Sieur de Baudrier, who had been Prior's attendant. The Sieur gives a very full account of the houses Prior lodged in, of his manner of travelling, and of the hours of his visits to Versailles; in all of which, says Swift, there is evident the vanity of that (the French) nation in a mean man, giving himself the airs of secretary. "We got to Versailles Wednesday the 21st about eleven at night; but instead of entering the town, the coachman drove us a back way into the fields, till we stopped at a certain vineyard, that I afterwards understood joined to the gardens of Madame Maintenon's lodgings. Here the two gentlemen alighted; Monsieur Prior calling to me, bid me search in the valise for a small box of writings, after which the coachman was ordered to attend in that place; and we proceeded on some paces till we stopped at a little postern which opened into a vineyard, whereof Monsieur de la Bastide had the key. He opened it very readily, and shut it after them, desiring me to stay till their return."[1] With such circumstance he led his readers to give credit to the Sieur de Baudrier.

When he goes beyond such details, his narrative is a subtle flattery of the Queen and the English people. He says, for instance, with unconscious irony, that it was Louis XIV. who, in spite of the flourishing position of his armies and navy and the sound state of his finances, had resolved once again to give peace to Europe, and made the first overtures to England. When Prior remarks on the poverty-stricken state of the French peasantry, the Sieur replies that in France the wealth was not divided among the people, but that the French only consulted the magnificence and power of their prince. When the

[1] "A New Journey to Paris," *Works*, vol. v. p. 201.

Sieur de Baudrier does overhear an important conversation, Prior is standing out for extreme terms: "For the love of God, Monsieur Prior," Louis is made to say, "relax something, if your instructions will permit you, else I shall despair of any good success in our negotiation."

5

The Treaty of Utrecht was signed at the beginning of April 1713. Swift thought an excellent peace had been made and that he had had a great deal to do with it. Now he expected his reward, and it was a common topic that he expected it.[1] But *A Tale of a Tub* still lay in the path of his promotion. When the Deanery of Wells had become vacant in January 1713, he had written at once to the Lord Treasurer (Oxford), submitting his fortunes entirely to him. Bolingbroke had assured him on the same occasion: "*Non tua res agitur*, Jonathan. It is the Treasurer's cause; it is my cause; it is everyman's cause who is embarked in our bottom." But Swift had mortal enemies. Good churchmen and good churchwomen thought him an infidel, and one of them was the Archbishop of York and another was the Queen. The intercessions of Oxford and Bolingbroke and the tears of Mrs. Masham were of no avail. It was

[1] The last stanza of "Plot upon Plot: A Ballad" (to the tune of "Heigh, Boys, up go we") ran:

Now God preserve our Gracious Queen;
And for this glorious deed,
May she the Doctor make a Dean
With all convenient speed:
What tho' the Tub hath hinder'd him,
As common story tells,
Yet surely now the Bandbox whim
Will help him down to Wells.

The Bandbox Plot was a bogus plot against the Earl of Oxford's life, said to have been discovered by Swift,

the same in April when a Prebendaryship of Windsor and a Deanery at Lichfield became vacant. The Queen was adamant. Finally, after much coming and going and many consultations, she consented to the transfer of Sterne, the little black Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, to the Bishopric of Dromore and the election of Swift to his place. Swift felt no joy at the prospect of passing his days in Ireland: he had thought that the ministry would not let him go. But he was not downcast. He had faced his fate and could speak humorously of it. "And I suppose MD is malicious enough to be glad, and rather have it (St. Patrick's) than Wells," he writes to Stella.

Swift set out for Ireland on June 1. But in the weeks before his departure there occurred an incident that throws some light on his character. The occasion of it was an attack on the Earl of Nottingham and his daughter in the *Examiner* of April 24, 1713. "No sooner," it wrote, "was D—— (Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham) among the Whigs and confirmed past retrieving, but Lady Char——te, is taken knotting in St. James's Chapel during divine service in the immediate presence both of God and Her Majesty, who were affronted together, that the family might appear to be entirely come over. I spare the beauty for the sake of her birth; but certainly there was no occasion for so public a proof that her fingers are more dexterous at tying a knot than her father's brains at perplexing the Government." Steele, who in the *Guardian* was making himself champion of the Whigs, boiled over at this. He called the writer of the *Examiner* a fawning miscreant. He had stood by and tamely heard him aggravate the disgraces of the brave and the unfortunate: he had seen him double the anguish of the unhappy man (Marlborough) and trample on the ashes of the dead. He will not tolerate such an attack on a

young lady's quiet and her honour. "Every man that hopes for a virtuous woman to his wife, that would defend his child or protect his mistress, ought to receive this insolence as done to himself."[1]

The *Examiner* replied on May 8, making "reparation to the offended beauty," but protesting that in such a satirical reference it was only following Steele's example. Steele grudgingly accepted the "awkward apology" and added: "I am now heartily sorry I called him a miscreant, that word I think signifies an unbeliever. *Mescroyant*, I take it, is the old French word. I will make no manner of guesses at him, if I may say *him*: for though sometimes I have been told by familiar friends, that they saw me such a time talking to the *Examiner*: others, who have rallied me upon the sins of my youth, tell me it is credibly reported that I have formerly lain with the *Examiner*. I have carried my point and rescued innocence from calamity; and it is nothing to me whether the *Examiner* writes against me in the character of an estranged friend or an exasperated mistress."

The two articles are typical of Steele. He had become white-hot in his political zeal and uneasy that he had any friendship with the man who had traduced his champions and thrown his hero to the wolves. Besides, Swift was boasting everywhere that but for his intervention he would have lost his place as Commissioner of the Stamp-Office as well as his Gazetteership. He would break with him on the first opportunity. He found it in the witticism at Lady Charlotte Finch's expense, and opened out with all his guns on his old friend; for "he who aggravates the disgraces of the unfortunate and unhappy" is Swift. But he had miscalculated, for Swift had no longer a direct connection with the *Examiner*; and so in the second article Steele climbs

[1] *Guardian*, No. 41.

down: there he hesitates whether he should accuse his old mistress (Mrs. Manley) or his estranged friend.

This delivered him into Swift's net. He wrote to Addison accusing Steele of the highest degree of baseness, ingratitude and injustice. Has he not heard that he does not even know the *Examiner*? Had he not interceded with the Lord Treasurer to keep Steele in employment? Steele replied that he deluded himself if he supposed his influence was so great. He was arguing in an Irish manner if he maintained that he had no connection with the *Examiner*. He, Steele, might as well say that there was a mistake in putting his name to the *Guardian*.

In the exchanges that followed Swift had the best of the argument. Steele in his impulsiveness had overreached himself: he ought to have made sure about the authorship of the *Examiner*. Yet he was essentially in the right. It was Swift who had started the fierce campaign against his fellow-churchman, Nottingham. It was he who had taught the *Examiner* the fine art of slander. It was intolerable that he should be allowed to bridle his Whig friends on the ground that in secret he was bestowing his largesse upon them.

The incident is trifling, but it brings out clearly the characters of both men: the one impulsive, overassertive but chivalrous; the other cool, able, but walled about in his self-conceit. And it embittered the political conflict that raged between them during the next winter.

Swift had written to Hester Johnson on his appointment to St. Patrick's that he had not thought the ministry would let him go. In the course of the summer they discovered that they should not have let him go, and sent message after message urging him to return to England as quickly as possible. He set out on August

31. On his arrival he found his new enemy, Steele, crying out against the non-fulfilment of the ninth article of the Treaty of Utrecht, by which it was agreed that the landward fortifications of Dunkirk and its harbour and mole should be demolished. The Mayor of Dunkirk had come to London to plead that the trade of the town would be destroyed if the article were fully carried out, and had not only appealed to the ministers of state but distributed by the hundred a pamphlet stating his case. On August 7, Steele wrote a paper for the *Guardian* in which he said in his flamboyant way that Britain *expected* that Dunkirk would be demolished. Immediately a pack of Tory writers were at his heels, accusing him of insolence to the Queen in suggesting that she did not intend to carry out the treaty. Steele replied with *The Importance of Dunkirk Consider'd*, a reprint of the Mayor, M. Tugge's pamphlet, and of his own paper to the *Guardian*, with a few pages to the effect that political discussion would be at an end if all criticism of the Queen's Government was to be regarded as treason. The central sentences in it are these : "What, are Majesty and Ministry consolidated, and must the People of Great Britain make no Distinction between one and the other? We very well know the Difference, Sir, and humbly conceive, that if a whole Ministry were impeached and condemn'd by the People of Great Britain in Parliament, for any notorious Neglect of Duty, or Breach of Trust, the Prince could not suffer by it. But such is the hardiness of these sort of Writers, that the Honour, the Interest, nay, the Person and Prerogative of the Sovereign, is communicated to and confounded with the Ministry; and those that by Law are accountable for all Wrongs done to the Publick, must be screened and protected under the Sacred and Incommunicable Character and Attributes of one, that by Law can do no

Wrong."[1] Swift then took the field with "The Importance of the Guardian Consider'd," in which he directly challenged Steele's point of view. A common man, he said, a half-educated journalist, for instance, or a tailor of Stockbridge, had no business to intervene with his crude ideas in the sublime matters of government. "I ask, What shadow of a pretence has he to offer his crude thoughts in matters of state? To print and publish them? 'To lay them before the Queen and Ministry?' and to reprove both for maladministration? How did he acquire those abilities of directing in the councils of princes? Was it from *publishing Tatlers* and *Spectators*, and writing now and then a *Guardian*? Was it from his being a soldier, alchemist, gazetteer, commissioner of stamped papers, or gentleman usher? No; but he insists it is every man's right to find fault with the administration in print whenever they please."[2] Steele understood the new principles on which the constitution of Britain was to run: Swift lived in a past age of Divine Right and Monarchical Tyranny.

But argument was the least of Swift's thoughts when he wrote "The Importance of the Guardian Consider'd in a Second Letter to the Bailiff of Stockbridge"[3] he had surer ways of overwhelming his "mortal enemies." In his writing, he says, Steele studies cadence instead of propriety, and fills up niches with words before he has adjusted his conceptions to them. He professes to know the world, but he knows it like every idle young rake who can pick up a wench or bilk a hackney coachman. His own story is that he has arrived at a sublime pitch of

[1] "The Importance of Dunkirk Consider'd," *Political Writings*, p. 62.

[2] "The Importance of the Guardian Consider'd," *Works*, vol. v. p. 298.

[3] Steele was M.P. for Stockbridge.

virtue, but unromantic people will conclude that he is trying to ingratiate himself with the party which will next be in power. Ingratitude is his worst fault. "I would only have his friends not to reward him too liberally. For as it was said of Cranmer, 'Do the Archbishop an ill turn and he is your friend for ever': So I do affirm of your member, 'Do Mr. Steele a good turn and he is your enemy for ever.' "

The next shot fired in this new episode of the Spider and the Bee was Steele's *Crisis*, which was published in January 1714, and dedicated to the Clergy of England because they, as Steele said, had more power than any one else to impress upon people of all ages the importance of the Protestant settlement of the crown. There is much in it about the great Deliverer of England, King William, and many florid pages on the great Duke of Marlborough, whose reputation cannot be impaired without the glory of England being sullied. He declares that the country is now in danger of losing what these two heroes have won.[1] "Many who are above being blinded by popular Noise and Outcry, yet seem to think the Warmth and Zeal of a publick Spirit to be little better than a Romantick Heat of Brain. Treasonable Books lately dispersed amongst us, that have apparently struck at the Protestant Succession in the House of Hanover, have passed almost without Observation from the Generality of the People; Subtle Queries have been Published about the Birth of a certain Person, which certain Person every Body knows to be intended for the Pretender; the Author of *The Conduct of the Allies*

[1] For the suggestion that the country was in danger and that the clergy and the Queen's ministers were indifferent to the Acts of Settlement, Steele, who had become M.P. for Stockbridge in the election of September 1713, was expelled from the House of Commons, in spite of the two Whig champions, Stanhope and Walpole, standing beside him while he made his defence.

has dared to drop insinuations about altering the succession."[1]

Steele published *The Crisis* on January 19, 1714: a few weeks later Swift issued as a counterblast *The Public Spirit of the Whigs.*

The Crisis was an effective piece of work; for though it must have been hurriedly written and though it consists largely of a reprint of the various Acts by which the Protestant Succession was settled in Britain, it contains several pages of rhetorical appeal that give one an impression of sincerity and frankness. Swift cuts it to pieces. Steele had declared that the Duke of Marlborough had not been permitted to enjoy the fruits of his glorious labour. "Ten Years Fruits, it seems, were not sufficient," says Swift, "and yet they were the fruitfullest Campaigns that ever any General cropt." Steele had asked, with a rhetorical gesture, whether Popery and Ambition were become tame and quiet Neighbours? "I am told," answers Swift, "that Ambition hath remov'd her Lodging and lives the very next Door to Faction, where they keep such a Racket that the whole Parish is disturbed and every Night in an uproar." Steele, in *The Crisis*, had darkly hinted that there were intriguers against the Protestant Succession in high places. Swift answers in effect: Speak out. Tell the worst. Shall I make these intriguers known? "The first and most notorious of these criminals is, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, Lord High Treasurer, who is reputed to be the chief minister; The second is, James Butler, Duke of Ormond, who commands the army, and designs to employ it in bringing over the Pretender; The third is, Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke, Secretary of State——" Even now, when we know that several of these ministers were actually enemies of

[1] "The Crisis," *Political Writings of Richard Steele*, p. 173.

the Protestant establishment, we feel, as we read, that Steele has been discomfited.

The passages that excited most anger in *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* were the contemptuous references to the Union of the English and Scottish Parliaments and to the fate of the Catalonians.[1] The Union, he says, was occasioned by a weak or corrupt minister giving his assent to the Act of Security in order to remove the danger of the Scots appointing a separate king; but that a war of a year or two would have served just as well to bring that fierce people to reason. It is little wonder that the Earl of Oxford had to protest that he knew nothing of the pamphlet, that the House of Lords denounced it as a factious libel, and that £300 were offered for the discovery of its author. A noble lord who protested against the Union before it took place, more correctly estimated the possibilities of that war of a year or two. "'Tis certain the nobility and gentry of Scotland are as Learned and as Brave as any Nation in Europe can boast of, and these are generally discontented: and as to the common people they are very numerous and very stout, but very poor: and who is that man, who can answer what such a Multitude, so arm'd, so Disciplin'd, with such Leaders, may do, especially since Opportunities do much alter Men from themselves; and there will never be wanting all the Promises and all the assistance France can give."[2]

The fate of the Catalonians was one of the results of the Treaty of Utrecht that was always being cast in the teeth of the Ministry. Steele had written in *The Crisis*: "I mention the Catalonians, but who can name the

[1] "The Public Spirit of the Whigs," *Works*, vol. v. p. 304.

[2] "The Lord Haversham's Speech in the House of Peers, on Thursday, Nov. 1704," *Miscellany*, in Folio, vol. vii. C.C.C. 3.2. Nat. Lib. of Scotland.

Catalonians without a tear! Brave unhappy People! drawn into the War by the encouragement of the Maritime Powers, from which only a Nation encompassed by Land by France and Spain could hope for relief and Protection, now abandoned and exposed to the Resentment of an enraged Prince, whose Person and interest they have always opposed; and yet still so fond of their Ancient Liberties, that tho' hemmed up in a nook of Land by the forces of the two Crowns, and closely besieged in Barcelona, they chuse rather, like their Countrymen, the famous Saguntines of old, to perish with their Wives and Children than live in Slavery. Did the French King with a Conquering Sword in his Hand, ever abandon the least and most inconsiderable of all his Allies? No!"[1]

To such outbursts Bolingbroke answered that the Queen's Ministry had done all in its power to save the Catalonians and their liberties. But a general peace had to be made: Britain could not allow herself to go on running into debt for the advantage of others and spend £7,000,000 a year when her revenue was £6,000,000: further, part of the peace was that the Allied troops should evacuate Catalonia. The Queen had used her good offices in favour of the Catalonians and would continue to use them. To this the only answer made in the House of Lords was that the Queen's offices had been ineffectual; but even this was withdrawn and replaced by the petition that she would continue her good offices. The situation in Catalonia was a tragedy. After fighting for years in the cause of the Allies she found herself deserted, yet still fought on. But Britain could hardly have been expected to continue a great continental war for the sake of this little province in which she had no special interest.

[1] "The Crisis," Steele's *Political Writings*, p. 171.

Swift puts forward the same argument as Bolingbroke, but he transforms it from a straightforward defence into a scornful denunciation. The Catalonians, he says, are a stubborn, rebellious people who came into the war for the purely selfish reason that the Allies were the winning side; and continue to fight not because of patriotism but because they are spurred on by agitators and adventurers. The privileges they are fighting for are simply opportunities of rebellion. King Philip is a gentle prince. "How dreadful then must be the Doom of those who hindered these People from submitting to the gentle Terms offered them by their Prince. And who, although they be conscious of their own Inability to furnish one single Ship for the support of the Catalans, are at this Instant spurring them on to their Ruin, by Promises of Aid and Protection." He could not foresee, of course, that this gentle Prince would make Barcelona run red with the blood of the Catalonians.

6

Without warning on June 1, 1714, Swift retired from London to Letcombe in Berkshire. He saw clearly that, owing to Queen Anne's fears of abandoning herself to any one party, to Harley's procrastinations and refinements, and to the quarrel between him and St. John, the Government was about to fall. He had performed great tasks in its support; but all having come to nothing, to his great chagrin he cut himself loose from Courts and ministers. In his first letters from Letcombe he pretended to be leading the life of a small country farmer. He boards himself and his man for a guinea a week. He converses little, using no more than a hundred words in three days; and then he speaks only to lament, over a mug of ale, the want of rain, the dryness of the hay, and the badness of the white mead at Chawdry. But this portrait

is a fine piece of irony. In reality during his first days at Letcombe he was trying to subdue his irritation against Harley and St. John for having ruined their cause. He occupied his time not in bucolic pleasures, but in uneasily reviewing the events of the past four years and bitterly noting the mistakes that had been made.

The chief work which he wrote at Letcombe was, *Some Free Thoughts on the Present State of Affairs*. He composed it in the hope that it would provide a means of retaining Tory supremacy under the Hanoverians. It was not printed till 1741. The reason given for the delay in the Advertisement to the Reader of the edition for that year is that the sudden death of Queen Anne prevented Swift from finishing it till it was too late. Actually, however, it was sent to Swift's friend, Barber the printer, with directions that it should be printed; but Bolingbroke, thinking that it would be inopportune, managed to hold it up.

It is one of the fairest and most moderate of Swift's tracts: rather advice to Bolingbroke than an attempt to sway public opinion. Yet it is no wonder that Bolingbroke thought it of no use to him, for in many places Swift gives evidence that he was out of touch with the political situation. He speaks, for instance, of Whigs, Low Churchmen, Republicans and Moderation Men in one breath as enemies and secret adversaries of the Queen, and urges that they be not given the smallest degree of civil or military power. It was impossible to act on such advice in the crisis of 1714. Even if it had been formulated in 1710 and Harley and St. John had been in agreement about it, it is doubtful if it would have come to anything. For it meant a High-Flying October Club Government that regarded all toleration of political and religious opinions different from their

own as "playing with a serpent." In giving this advice in July 1714, Swift miscalculated completely the strength of the Whigs in London and among the aristocracy; and forgot that the Tory majority was made up of Moderation Men and Low Churchmen as well as of True-Blues like himself.

Further, had it been printed it would have stirred dissension among the Tories. Swift was a High-Churchman in that he would not tolerate Dissent, but he supported the Hanoverian settlement and never entertained any thought of a Stuart returning as King of England. In the tract he tries to shepherd the whole Tory party into the same fold as himself. He tells how he has questioned many at Court about the intrigues with the Pretender; and how that from neither friend nor foe has he received any proof that they existed. And he urges the Tory party to prove their loyalty to the Act of Settlement by advocating that the young son of George Ludwig, the heir to the throne, be educated in England. But this was the last thing the High-Fliers wished to do. The coming of the heir from Hanover would have put an end for ever to hopes of another settlement of the crown, and the Tories, with the whole-hearted support of Queen Anne, had for years fought against any such proposal.

Finally, Bolingbroke must have resented the censure of the Earl of Oxford and himself. Oxford had been dismissed from the office of Lord Treasurer and Bolingbroke had become chief minister of the Queen's Government. And it was just at this moment that Swift chose to make a cold and searching analysis of the characters of the two, and proposed to publish it as an explanation why the strength of the greatest Tory majority ever known in England had been able to accomplish nothing.

Many explanations, says Swift, have been given why

a Government, supported by the landed interest and nearly all the inferior clergy, has gradually lost power. Some say that it was due to the necessity of holding so many people in hand with promises; others that it was due to the impossibility of dismissing officers whose talents were necessary to the army and state. But one may search too deeply into these affairs: reasoners at a distance often make a mystery where there is none: the first springs of great events are often mean and little. The real explanation is that there has been no communication and concert between the two principal ministers. "I must therefore take the boldness to assert, that all these discontents, how ruinous soever they may prove in the consequences, have most unnecessarily arisen from the want of a due communication and concert. Every man must have a light sufficient for the length of the way he is appointed to go: There is a degree of confidence due to all stations; and a petty constable will neither act cheerfully nor wisely without that share of it which properly belongs to him. . . . This reserved, mysterious way of acting, upon points where there appeared not the least occasion for it, and towards persons who, at least in right of their posts, expected a more open treatment, was imputed to some hidden design, which every man conjectured to be the very thing he was most afraid of. . . . But the effects of this mystical manner of proceeding did not end here: For, the late dissensions between the great men at court (which have been, for some time past, the public entertainment of every coffeehouse) are said to have arisen from the same fountain; while on one side very great reserve, and certainly very great resentment on the other . . . have inflamed animosities to such a height, as to make all reconcilement impracticable. . . . A ship's crew quarrelling in a storm, or while their enemies

are within gunshot, is but a faint idea of this fatal infatuation."[1]

During his stay at Chawdry he was also busy on his history of the four years in which he had known intimately the ways of ministers and Governments. Immediately on going to Ireland (in August 1714) he wrote *Memoirs Relating to that Change in the Queen's Ministry in* 1710, and *An Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry.*

In these pamphlets and histories, and in some remarks on political affairs in his letters, we get Swift's reflections on the events in which he had taken so important a part. His main conclusion was that the only necessary qualifications for a politician are diligence, honesty and a moderate share of plain natural sense. The greatest infelicities have happened to England, and the greatest discontents have arisen among her people, he says, because the extraordinary men who have governed her have governed as though they had only to think of the *arcana imperii* and could neglect the common forms of business. In every politician there should be an infusion of an alderman. Plain good sense is a better endowment of a statesman than acquaintance with the high strain in politics. It is easier to divide a piece of paper with a blunt piece of ivory than with a sharp knife. This is one of God's blessings to the world; it would be in a sorry condition if great affairs always required a great genius to settle them, and the science of governing were not obvious to common capacities. These thoughts were the bitter fruit of his four years of acquaintanceship with ministers of state.

[1] "Some Free Thoughts upon the Present State of Affairs," *Works,* vol. v. p. 404.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEAN OF ST. PATRICK'S

SWIFT was installed as Dean of St. Patrick's on June 13, 1713.

Political passion ran even higher in Dublin than in London in that year. The sympathies of the landed gentlemen were, in the main, Whig. They looked on the Tories as those who in 1689 had triumphed with James II. and turned them out of their estates and usurped their titles. All but place-men and officials and certain contumacious members of the lower clergy were in favour of the Revolution Settlement and the Protestant Succession. Yet though the pot was boiling over, a Tory Lord-Lieutenant, the Duke of Ormond, and a Tory Lord Chancellor, Sir Constantine Phipps, tried to hold the lid down.

In the turmoil Swift was not at his ease. The friend of Oxford, Bolingbroke and Ormond was suspect; no one wanted back the absentee Vicar of Laracor, who had been bearing himself so proudly in London for the last three years. William King, Archbishop of Dublin, was angry at his appointment, though he consoled himself with the thought that he would do less mischief than he would have done as a Bishop.[1] The scurrilous verses nailed to the door of St. Patrick's on the day of his installation show what the laughers and scorners thought:

[1] *A Great Archbishop of Dublin, William King, D.D.* By Sir Charles Simeon King. Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, May 8, 1716.

I

To-day this Temple gets a Dean,
Of Parts and Fame uncommon;
Us'd both to Pray and to Prophane,
To serve both God and Mammon.

II

When Wharton reign'd, a Whig he was;
When Pembroke, that's dispute, Sir;
In Oxford's time, what Oxford pleas'd;
Non-con, or Jack, or neuter.

III

This Place He got by Wit and Rhyme
And many ways most odd;
And might a Bishop be in Time
Did he believe in God. . . .

VII

Look down, St. Patrick, look, we pray,
On thine own Church and Steeple:
Convert thy Dean on this Great Day;
Or else God help the people.

VIII

And now, whene'er his Deanship dies,
Upon his Tomb be grav'n;
A man of God here buried lies,
Who never thought of Heaven.[1]

Swift remained only a fortnight in Dublin, then in a dejected and miserable frame of mind retired to the quiet of Laracor. He intended to remain in Ireland, but the differences between Oxford and Bolingbroke became so acute that he was urged to return to England to try to settle them. He set out on August 29.

By August of the next year two of his three friends

[1] *Gulliveriana: or a Fourth Volume of Miscellanies*, 1728.

were fugitives in France and one was in the Tower on a charge of high treason, and he was back in his Dublin Deanery, getting rid of his predecessor's cat, shelving a room for his books and putting up a new chimney-piece. But though he had a hundred things to occupy him—his over-heated hay, a draughty stable and indolent workmen—he was dejected. It was at this time that he wrote the lines, *In Sickness*, in which he complains that he has now only formal friends, and prophesies for himself an early death.[1] He could not rest in Dublin; and for the next year or two was continually on the march between the country houses of his two or three Tory friends.

He had reason to be troubled. The Government in England feared a rising: they were puzzled by the silence of the vast Catholic population, and thought some mischief was brewing among them; and they had reports before them that many of the lower clergy were telling their people that Lutheranism was worse than Popery, and asking them to sing Psalm 137, "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."[2] In this unrest Swift was under suspicion. A rumour spread in London that this Profligate Mercenary Tool, this Libeller, had absconded in fear of arrest. His friends warned him to put his papers in a safe place; and Archbishop King told him to be on his guard lest he should be implicated in the revelations Bolingbroke was expected to make. His letters were opened in the Post Office, and sent over to London for examination. This Swift knew, but he did not know how narrowly he had escaped imprisonment; for Archbishop King, one of the two Lord Justices, was

[1] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 180.

[2] Mant's *History of the Church of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 291. Letter of October 30, 1714.

authorized to put him under confinement, if he thought fit, and to see, at least, that he gave sufficient bail for his good behaviour.[1]

Swift did not take this treatment meekly or fearfully. He went to King and strongly protested against his letters being opened. He wrote an account of the interview to a Tory friend: "I have been much entertained with news of myself since I came here: it is said there was another packet directed to me, seized by the Government, but after opening several seals it proved only plum-cake. I was this morning with the Archbishop who told me how kind he had been in preventing my being sent to etc. I said I had been a firm friend of the last Ministry, but thought it brought me to trouble myself in little parties without doing good, that I therefore expected the protection of the Government, and that if I had been called before them, I would not have answered one syllable or named one person."[2]

But though Swift put on a bold face he hated his life in Dublin. Slanderous pamphlets and poems were written about him, comparing his avarice with the hospitality of his predecessor in the Deanery, and charging him with being a hypocrite and a time-server.[3] He was liable to insult as he took exercise in the streets and public highways. On one occasion a young nobleman tried to ride him down, then threatened him and his servants with pistols. "He was," says Deane Swift, "frequently pointed at and abused by several of the meaner shopkeepers, mechanics and other base fellows without name or occupation." His Chapter in St. Patrick's, which was largely composed of Whigs, crossed him, deny-

[1] *A Great Archbishop of Dublin*, p. 180. Letter to King from Charles Delafaye, Assistant Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant.

[2] *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 283. To Chetwode, June 21, 1715.

[3] *Dr. S——'s Real Diary*, 1715.

ing to him, for instance, the right of negativing their proposals, which, he claimed, all predecessors in the deanship had possessed. His Vicars Choral leased a piece of Cathedral ground without his authority.

But gradually he won favour for himself. In the gay, light-hearted society of Dublin, the brightest wit could not be hid in a corner. Besides, as he himself put it later, nature instructs even the goslings to huddle together when the kite is hovering overhead. The Irish peasantry and working-people were in a more wretched state than those of France and Turkey. All the good appointments in Ireland were given neither to Irish Tories nor to Irish Whigs but to chaplains of the Lord-Lieutenants and favourites of the English court.[1] Even Archbishop King, the nominee of the Hanoverian Government and their chief agent in Ireland, was sore at these injustices. Over these Swift cemented a kind of reconciliation with him.

The Earl of Orrery thus describes the change that came over popular feeling towards him about 1720: "In the year 1720, he began to re-assume, in some degree, the character of a political writer. A small pamphlet *In defence of the Irish manufactures*, was, I believe, his first essay (in *Ireland*) in that kind of writing: and to that pamphlet he owed the turn of the popular tide in his favour. His sayings of wit and humour had been handed about, and repeated from time to time among the people. They had the effect of an artful preface, and had pre-engaged all readers in his favour. They were adapted to the understanding, and pleased the imagination of the vulgar: and he was now looked upon in a new light, and distinguished by the title of THE DEAN. . . .

The pamphlet, proposing the universal use of *Irish* manufactures *within the kingdom*, had captivated all

[1] Mant, vol. ii. p. 332.

hearts. *Some little pieces of poetry to the same purpose* were no less acceptable and engaging. The attachment which the Dean bore to the true interest of Ireland was no longer doubted. His patriotism was as manifest as his wit. He was looked upon with pleasure and respect as he passed through the streets: and he had attained so high a degree of popularity as to become an arbitrator in the disputes of property among his neighbours: nor did any man dare to appeal from his opinion or to murmur at his decrees."[1]

In *On the Death of Doctor Swift*, Swift gives two accounts of his activities in Ireland. In the one he represents himself as a patriot and a benefactor:

> The Dean did by his pen defeat
> An infamous destructive cheat:

In the other he represents himself as an embittered misanthropist. His motives certainly were not always pure; and his mind was often obscured by passion and prejudice. "I do profess without affectation," he wrote to Pope in June 1728, "that your kind opinion of me as a patriot, as you call it so, is what I do not deserve; because what I do is owing to perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly, and baseness about me, among which I am forced to live."[2] If an opportunity occurred of a blow at the Whig Government that had driven out his friends, he seized it whatever might be the result. Even at the height of his popularity he had no sentimental illusions about the people that hallooed him on, comparing them to the street boys of Madrid, who, when a Jew is being led to the stake, cry "Sta Firme, Moses," lest they should be robbed of their entertainment. In his relations with

[1] Orrery's *Remarks*, p. 69.
[2] *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 34.

the savage Irish he bore himself as one of their conquerors: he detested Irish Presbyterians. There were many men in Ireland between 1720 and 1740 who wrought with all their strength and all their fortune for its good, and deserved the name of patriot—Archbishop King, Alan Brodrick, Lord Middleton, and even that detested Bishop who upheld the English interest, Archbishop Boulter. Swift was not a patriot as they were. He was a leader of rebellion who put his own violent prejudices and enmities before everything. It was not from a pure love of his native land that he raised the flag of revolt and roused the passions of the Irish people to fever heat. Yet amid the dross of prejudice and enmity there burned a fierce and increasing indignation at the injustices from which Ireland suffered.

I

The population of Ireland in 1720 was about 1,800,000. Of these 1,400,000 were Roman Catholics.[1] One-half of the remainder were Presbyterians, and the other half members of the Church of Ireland. There were among the Protestants a sprinkling of French Huguenots and German Lutherans, who had emigrated to Ireland.

The position of a conscientious priest of the Church of Ireland was not enviable. The livings were so small that it was often necessary to unite from ten to a dozen of them to give an incumbent £80 to £100 a year. The parsonages and churches in the remoter parts of the country were either dilapidated or in ruin. The Protestant land-owning gentlemen were well disposed to

[1] In "An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland" (1727), Arthur Dobbs concludes, from a consideration of the number of houses, that it has a population of 1,669,664. He allows 4.36 persons to a family.

the Church, but they set the rents of their farms so high that the farmers, having paid them, had nothing left for their tithes to the clergy.

Archbishop King, in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1722, paints a sad picture of the Church in that year:

"Your Grace will find by the public prints that Doctor Fitzgerald, Bishop of Clonfert, is dead. The poor man has had hardly any use of his reason for several years; I believe he was about the age of eighty-eight. About twelve years ago he married a young woman about twenty who governed him and the diocese in a wretched manner; no discipline, no due care of spirituals or temporals, his manse house gone to ruin and everything out of order. His predecessor, Dr. Woolley, was as bad as he, though Sir James Ware gave a great character of him. These two have held this bishopric with that of Aghaduy (in Latin *Duarensis*) since the year 1665. The case of the clergy is thus: there are no glebes; one-quarter of the tithes are held by the bishop; two-fourths have been generally in the hands of impropriators; so the clergy have been possessed of one-fourth. The diocese is pretty large; yet has but ten beneficed clergymen and about half of these non-resident."

The Church of Ireland suffered through being governed from England. When a rich living or deanery or bishopric fell vacant, it was given to a chaplain of the Lord-Lieutenant or to a favourite of one of the English Ministers, or at the best to an absentee Irishman who never saw his parish except at the time of the Bishop's visitation. Archbishop King, the Government's own agent, might nominate whom he pleased; he was sure to be overruled. From 1714 to 1733 not ten clergy-

men were given a good living or promoted except for their affection to the Hanoverian line. It broke King's heart to see his hard-working curates grow old and face destitution while rich benefices were heaped on young men from England, who had no claim on them.[1]

It was this injustice more than any other that made Swift stand forward as the champion of his Church. In his interview with Walpole in 1726 it was of this he spoke at greatest length and most forcibly. He wrote to the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Carteret, in 1725: "The misfortune of having bishops perpetually from England, as it must needs quench the spirit of emulation among us to excel in learning and the study of divinity, so it produces another great discouragement, that those prelates usually draw after them colonies of sons, nephews, cousins, or old college companions, to whom they bestow the best preferments in their gift, and thus the young men sent into the Church from the University here, have no better prospect than to be curates or small country vicars for life. . . . I believe your Excellency will agree that there is not another kingdom in Europe where the natives, even those descended from the conquerors, have been treated as if they were almost unqualified for any employment either in Church or State."[2]

The Roman Catholics were an oppressed race. By a succession of penal laws nearly all their rights as citizens had been taken from them. An Irishman was not allowed to possess or carry arms; he could not acquire land for a term longer than thirty-one years; he could not practise as a solicitor, or be a Justice of the Peace, or a Judge, or a Member of Parliament, or hold any civil office. He had to pay high taxes in order to be

[1] *A Great Archbishop of Dublin, William King, D.D.*, p. 426.
[2] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 248.

permitted to carry on a trade in a town. In times when an invasion from the Pretender was feared, his horses could be seized. The priests of his Church were forbidden to administer the sacraments to him unless they declared that the Stuarts had no right to the throne.[1] Under these severe laws many Irish left the country to serve in the armies of France and Spain, or crossed to North America, binding themselves, in return for the passage, to serve four or five years in the plantations.

The Irish were an oppressed and miserable race, but they had not lost their spirit, and they were not beaten to the ground. The Government in England and the people of England thought of them as wild creatures who in time would be taken in the toils and extirpated or educated into Englishmen. But the Lord-Lieutenant and his advisers in Dublin knew better. They saw the penal laws being openly defied. The trade of the country was gradually passing into their hands. Catholic gentlemen in Dublin wore their swords with impunity,[2] and in Connaught and Munster they met in assemblies fully armed. Instead of their being converted to the Church of Ireland, they were making inroads on it; for whenever an Anglo-Irishman married an Irishwoman, he inclined to adopt his wife's religion, and no laws could prevent his children from growing up Catholics. They had three thousand priests to the six hundred of the Protestant Church. They could not legally hold civil offices; but a solicitor did not count it a sin to abjure with a mental reserve his religion and the Pretender, in order to defeat the enemies of his country.[3]

What did Swift think of this vast Catholic population

[1] *The Case of the Roman Catholicks of Ireland. Humbly represented to both Houses of Parliament*, 1724. By the Rev. Doctor Nary.

[2] Boulter's *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 68.

[3] Boulter's *Letters*, vol. i. p. 226.

which was kept outside the gates of civilization? When he used the phrase "Poor Ireland!" was he thinking of this oppressed proud race that brooded on the memory of its ancient wrongs? The answer generally given is a direct negative. And certainly so far as the enforcement of the Penal Code was concerned, he supported the policy of the Government. Swift saw no terrible injustice in that. But he had some sympathy and admiration for Roman Catholicism. It had occurred to him that the Irish had done no wrong in sticking to their old religion. In standing by their ancient faith they had done better than the Presbyterians, who, during the Civil War, had shattered to pieces churches, cities and palaces, and then at the Restoration put on a mask of obedience and so kept the fruits of their rebellion.

This sympathy with the "wild Irish" may not be of much worth. It was praise of a dead foe; for the Roman Catholics seemed to him to be a beaten people, hewers of wood and drawers of water. And it was praise of one foe used as a bludgeon to knock down another: Roman Catholicism he compared to a lion whose claws had been pared and whose teeth had been extracted for the general safety: Presbyterianism he compared to a wild cat, which must be exterminated.

His sympathy with the "wild Irish," not as Roman Catholics but as men, was much stronger. In the journeys that he so often made throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, and during his stays at Quilca and Market Hill, he came to know the descendants of the poets, professors, historians and chiefs who had once ruled Ireland. He does not speak of them with much reverence. "Our servants eat and drink like the devil," he writes from Quilca, "and pray for rain, which entertains them at cards and sleep, which are much lighter than spades, sledges and crows. Their maxim is:

Eat like a Turk,
Sleep like a dormouse;
Be last at work,
At victuals foremost."[1]

But he liked to be in their company:

"He's all the day sauntering,
With labourers bantering,
Among his colleagues,
A parcel of Teagues,
Whom he brings in among us
And bribes with mundungus.
(He little believes
How they laugh in their sleeves.)
Hail, fellow, well met,
All dirty and wet;
Find out if you can,
Who's master, who's man;
Who makes the best figure,
The Dean or the digger;
And which is the best
At cracking a jest."[2]

His deliberate opinion was that the laziness, perverseness and thievish disposition of the poor native Irish was due to the misery in which they lived. "I do assert that from several experiments I have made in travelling over both kingdoms, I have found the poor cottagers here, who could speak our language, to have a much better natural taste for good sense, humour and raillery than ever I observed among people of the like sort in England. But the millions of oppressions they lie under, the tyranny of their landlords, the ridiculous zeal of their priests and the general misery of the whole nation, have been enough to damp the best spirits under the sun." No one has paid a finer tribute to the courage and gallantry and wit of the Irish people than Swift. In a letter to Charles Wogan, a soldier of fortune, who had

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 242.
[2] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 97.

seen much service abroad and helped to arrange the marriage of the Pretender and the Princess Sobiesky, he says that "he cannot but highly esteem those gentlemen of Ireland, who with all the disadvantages of being exiles and strangers, have been able to distinguish themselves by their valour and conduct in many parts of Europe, I think above all other nations, which ought to make the English ashamed of the reproaches they cast on the ignorance, the dullness and the want of courage in the Irish natives; those defects, wherever they happen, arising only from the poverty and slavery they suffer from their inhuman neighbours, and the base corrupt spirits of too many of the chief gentry. By such events as these, the very Grecians are grown slavish, ignorant and superstitious."[1]

He did not regard the Dissenters as friends or allies. For the most part they were Presbyterians of Scottish descent, which added to his animosity; for, except for one or two encomiums on the independent fighting spirit of Scotland, he always spoke of the country with bitterness. The Scottish gladly, he says, exchange their barren hills of Loquaber for the fruitful valleys of Antrim and Down; and very soon by their pertinaciousness and cunning not only possess the land but make it impossible for the natives of the place to live near them. In *The Story of the Injured Lady* he describes Scotland as a capricious and tyrannical woman who has ousted Ireland from her lover, England's favour. "As to her person she is tall and lean, and very ill-shaped; she hath bad features, and a worse complexion; she hath a stinking breath, and twenty ill smells about her besides; which are yet more insufferable by her natural sluttishness; for she is always lousy and never without the itch. As to other qualities she hath no reputation either for

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 328.

virtue, honesty, truth or manners; and it is no wonder, considering what her education hath been. Scolding and cursing are her common conversation."[1]

On what grounds did he oppose them? He thought that if there were no religious test the Church of Ireland would be in danger. All his furious prejudices were up in arms at the suggestion that its privileges should be diminished. He had been bred in it; he had been its ambassador; he was at the head of its chief cathedral. So, with his usual trick of mad exaggeration he represented it as the only dam against the flood of new political and religious doctrines which had been making headway both in Dublin and London. The Socinians and Hell-Fire Clubs would increase if its power were diminished. The King and the Throne would soon be thought of with contempt, if the anti-monarchical race who ever refused to celebrate the day of King Charles, the blessed martyr, were admitted to office without taking the Test.

He urged in his bitter way that it was politically expedient, if not justifiable by reason, to put this inhibition on the Presbyterians. It could not be called persecution, he argued, for their property and lives were not endangered. Even Holland, the patroness of liberty, did as much; for her politicians, if not her warriors, had to belong to the state Church.

The Presbyterians had been on the Parliament side in the Civil War and Cromwell's accomplices at the sack of Drogheda. They desired to cast out from it all superstitious ceremonies, ecclesiastical titles, habits, distinctions and superiorities as rags of popery. These causes of hatred, joined to that old heritage of hatred he had received from his ancestors and from his favourite author, Samuel Butler, maddened him. He

[1] *Works*, vol. vii. p. 97.

became fierce, tempestuous, unreasonable. He cursed Presbyterianism in the words of Scripture: "For, O my Soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."[1]

2

While Roman Catholic, Dissenter and Church of Ireland man each had his separate grievance, they all had one grievance in common—the manner in which England managed Irish trade for her own benefit. "I have heard of a quarrel in a tavern," says Swift, "where all were at daggers-drawing, till one of the company cried out, desiring to know the subject of the quarrel; which, when none of them could tell, they put up their swords, sat down, and passed the rest of the evening in quiet. The former part hath been our case; I hope the latter will be so too; that we shall sit down amicably together, at least until we have something that may give us a title to fall out; since nature hath instructed even a brood of goslings to stick together while the kite is hovering over their heads."[2]

Ireland in the earlier half of the seventeenth century had carried on a large trade in cattle with England. The English graziers and stock-breeders, however, fearing that their markets would be taken from them, managed to get laws passed in 1665 and 1680 which stopped this. The Irish farmers then found it more profitable to raise sheep for the sake of their wool than to breed cattle. The manufacture of woollen goods in-

[1] "The Presbyterians' Plea of Merit," *Works*, vol. iv. p. 47.

[2] The *Drapier's Letters*, Letter VII. vol. vi. p. 194.

creased rapidly. But again a barrier was put in the way. By a law of 1699 the English Parliament totally prohibited the export of woollens from Ireland. The country now fell back on the making of linen. From this the death-blow was withheld, but the new industry had to struggle for life against discouragements for a century.

The injustice of these trade laws aroused Swift's intense indignation. In 1720 he made his first attack on them in *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture*. It urges the women of Ireland to buy not so much as a stay-lace made in England, and to wear only the silks and woollens manufactured in their own country. In addition, all the evils from which Ireland suffered—absenteeism, rack rents, the lack of manufactures, bad methods of farming—are laid bare. Others catalogued these evils; Swift described them as if each were a fire within his bones. "The fable in *Ovid* of Arachne and Pallas, is to this purpose. The goddess had heard of one Arachne, a young virgin, very famous for spinning and weaving. They both met upon a trial of skill; and Pallas finding herself almost equalled in her own art, stung with rage and envy, knocked her rival down, turned her into a spider, enjoining her to spin and weave for ever, out of her own bowels and in a very narrow compass. I confess, that from a boy, I always pitied poor Arachne, and could never heartily love the goddess on account of so cruel and unjust a sentence; which, however, is fully executed upon us by England, with further additions of rigour and severity. For the greatest part of our bowels and vitals are extracted, without allowing us the liberty of spinning and weaving them."[1]

About four years later Swift wrote another pamphlet,

[1] "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture," *Works*, vol. vii. p. 21.

dealing with absenteeism, rack rents, the destruction of the woollen trade, the injunction that all goods exported from Ireland must be carried in English ships, and suggesting remedies for these ills.[1] This was not printed till 1735, but it was the first to be written of a long series of tracts and pamphlets on Irish affairs.[2]

But the most notable of his tracts in defence of Ireland was that group known as the *Drapier's Letters*. Copper coins for small change became gradually scarcer during the first twenty years of the eighteenth century. In consequence, counterfeit halfpennies and farthings were common, and employers had often to pay their servants with tokens. To supply the want the Government in England decided, in 1722, on the advice of the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Sunderland (for Walpole had not yet succeeded to that office) to issue a new copper coinage.[3] But to the Irish people the remedy seemed worse than the need. Their Parliament had no voice in fixing the amount or quality of the coin: the grant of the patent was simply announced: and, what stirred their anger above all else, it had been given to a man of boastful and domineering character, a rich mine-owner and iron merchant, a certain William Wood, who, it soon leaked out, had paid one of the King's German mistresses £14,000 for it.

Swift, in the disguise of a Dublin merchant, M. B. Drapier, urged that all, labourer and squire, servant and master, soldier and lord, should refuse to accept the new money; and questioned the right of an English

[1] *An Humble Address to Both Houses of Parliament.* By M. B. Drapier. This is generally printed as the seventh of the *Drapier's Letters.*

[2] "Historical and Political Tracts—Irish," *Works*, vol. vii.

[3] Walpole, when he became Lord Treasurer in April 1722, on the death of Sunderland, though he did not like the patent, complacently allowed it to go forward to the Parliament of Ireland.

King and an English Parliament to force it upon the kingdom of Ireland. He raised the first nationalist cry, organized the first Irish boycot association on a national scale, and became the darling of his countrymen. For a few months all Ireland, with the exception of the placemen who had just come over, was behind him. But it is a mistake to suppose that he began the opposition. Whigs like the Lord Chancellor, Lord Middleton, his brother Thomas Brodrick, his son St. John Brodrick and the Archbishop of Dublin, had at once protested against the patent. But it was Swift who raised the flame of rebellion so high that it could not be quenched till Wood and his coin had been driven from Ireland. Lord Middleton and other great people frowned on his dangerous exaggerations. But the Irish common people recognized by their devotion to him from that time onwards that, had it not been for his intervention, the Duchess of Kendal and Mr. Wood would have won the day.

The Drapier's first letter was addressed To the Tradesmen, Shopkeepers, Farmers and Common People in General of Ireland. It is likely that many of them believed it to be a true account of what would happen if Wood's halfpence were accepted. To many its plain, bare style as if spelt out slowly sentence by sentence, by one who had no art of words, and its one touch of colour —his comparison of the little gold and silver he has to his heart's blood—must have been a complete disguise. But had it deceived nobody it would equally have carried the day. His picture of an Ireland where the sole business was the transportation of Wood's copper coins, won the laugh to his side.

The current money in Ireland, he says, is not above four hundred thousand pounds. Wood, in accordance with the terms of his patent, means to coin ninety

thousand pounds, and once these are accepted he will go on to make and introduce counterfeits. The Dutch, who are in the habit of counterfeiting the base money of Ireland, will imitate him, and soon all the gold and silver will be drawn from the kingdom. "If a 'squire has a mind to come to town to buy clothes and wine and spices for himself and family, or perhaps to pass the winter here, he must bring with him five or six horses loaden with sacks as the farmers bring their corn; and when his lady comes in her coach to our shops, it must be followed by a car loaden with Mr. Wood's money. And I hope we shall have the grace to take it for no more than it is worth."

The second letter appeared about the middle of August 1724, addressed to Mr. Harding, the printer of the first letter. The Committee of Inquiry that had been appointed had not yet issued its report, but one or two of its findings had leaked out. It had recommended that the sum to be coined should be reduced to £40,000; and that no one should be obliged to take more than 5d. in a single payment. Coin £40,000! Swift says: that would be to cure a scratch on the finger by cutting off the arm. Ireland needs at the most £10,000 of small change. Oblige me to take 5d. of his brass in every payment! Good God, who are this wretch's advisers? I will shoot Mr. Wood and his deputies through the head like highwaymen or housebreakers, if they dare to force one farthing of their coin upon me in the payment of a hundred pounds.

The second letter deals with more vital matter than the first, the idea that a private individual can dictate terms to a nation. "It is no loss of honour to submit to the lion, but who, with the figure of a man, can think with patience of being devoured alive by a rat." The attack culminates in the fourth letter, which was addressed

to the Whole People of Ireland and appeared on October 13, 1724. To calm the feeling against Wood's patent, Walpole sent to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant, Carteret, an old acquaintance of Swift, and likely, by his bearing and temperament, to be more pleasing to the Irish people than his predecessor, the Duke of Grafton. Swift welcomed him with this letter, for the discovery of the writer of which there was very soon a proclamation issued offering a reward of £300. By its defiant and bitter tone the letter challenged such action.

The fundamental idea in it is that Ireland is an independent kingdom over which laws made by the English Lords and Commons should have no authority unless with its own consent. This had been put forward with moderation but with great force and learning some twenty years earlier (February 8, 1697–8) by Wm. Molyneux in *The Case of Ireland's being bound by Acts of Parliament in England Stated.*[1] Molyneux sets out to prove that the expedition of Henry II. to Ireland was not an expedition of conquest; that at no later date can English victories in Ireland be said to have "subdued" it; and that the English statute laws were extended to her with her own consent. He answers the objection that Ireland is a colony, by pointing out that King William has Ireland in his title but not Maryland or Virginia. And as a disciple of Locke he makes the claim that whatever contract to its disadvantage Ireland may have been forced into in the past, she is entitled now to break it in the name of the common rights of mankind.

Swift goes no further than Molyneux, but he sets forth his argument with jeers and mockery and daring boldness. Having pointed out, for instance, that the King has the prerogative of coining money within the limits

[1] This principle was also laid down in James II.'s Irish Parliament in May 1689. Stephen Gwynn's *History of Ireland*, p. 340.

set by the law, he adds contemptuously that of course he may set his royal image on whatever material he pleases and offer them in any country from England to Japan "with this small limitation, that nobody alive is compelled to take them." In reason, Molyneux had said, all government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery. Swift ironically agreed and added: "But in fact eleven men well armed will certainly subdue one in his shirt." Molyneux had shown that Ireland was not a depending kingdom; Swift said it was an "imperial crown" held from God; and insolently added:

"I am so far from *depending* upon the people of England, that if they should ever rebel against my sovereign (which God forbid), I would be ready at the first command from His Majesty to take arms against them, as some of *my* countrymen did against *theirs* at Preston. And if such a rebellion should prove so successful as to fix the Pretender on the throne of England, I would venture to transgress that statute so far as to lose every drop of my blood to hinder him from being King of Ireland."

Swift wrote three other pamphlets, chiefly on Wood's halfpence, though two of them were not printed till a collected edition of his works was published in Dublin in 1735. His reason for writing them can best be gathered from his own words: "If the bellman of each parish, as he goes his circuit, would cry out, every night, 'Past twelve o'clock; Beware of Wood's halfpence,' it would probably cut off the occasion for publishing any more pamphlets; provided that in country towns it were done upon market days. For my own part, as soon as it shall be determined that it is not against law, I will begin the experiment in the liberty of St. Patrick's; and hope my example may be followed in the whole city. But if

authority shall think fit to forbid all writings, or discourses upon this subject, except such as are in favour of Mr. Wood, I will obey as it becomes me; only when I am in danger of bursting, I will go and whisper among the reeds, not any reflection upon the wisdom of my countrymen; but only these few words, Beware of Wood's Halfpence."[1]

3

In *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* (1720) and in the *Drapier's Letters*, Swift had shown a passionate interest in the state of the Irish people and in the state of Irish trade. That did not stop with the defeat of Wood and his coin. From 1726 to 1736 he threw himself again and again into the fight to free Ireland from the tyranny of the English Navigation Laws and the laws forbidding the manufacture of woollen goods in Ireland. In 1728, for instance, he wrote *A Short View of the State of Ireland*. He begins it by enumerating, with assumed calm, the signs by which one may judge a country's prosperity—fruitfulness of soil, industriousness of the people, safe ports and havens, freedom of import and export, encouragement of agriculture, bestowal of places of profit on natives, the spending of rents from the land and income from industry within the country, the right of coining money. One of these Ireland did possess: fruitfulness of soil, but no other. The people, he says, might be industrious, if they were not in the position of the Israelites to whom Pharaoh said, "Ye are idle, Ye are idle," when they complained that they could not make bricks without straw. Ireland has safe ports and havens, but they are of no more use to it than a beautiful prospect to a man in a dungeon. A comfortable Englishman over to pay a

[1] The *Drapier's Letters*, Letter V., *Works*, vol. vi. p. 152.

short visit and learn the language, might think its shoeless, stockingless farmers, living on buttermilk and potatoes in hovels worse than the hog-styes in England, a prosperous people. If he is right, it is prosperous against every law of Nature and Reason, like the thorn of Glastonbury that blossoms in the midst of winter. Ireland's prosperity is like that of a hospital where all the household officers grow rich while the poor, for whose sake it was built, are almost starving for want of food and raiment.

It has been maintained that in order to sting the consciences of his fellow-Dubliners he exaggerated the misery of the peasants and working-people. But tracts and letters of the period paint a similar picture, though not with the same master hand. The one defect of his Irish pamphlets was that in his violent egoism he was too ready to sweep aside contemptuously all proposed reforms but his own.

Irish trade was fettered by innumerable restrictions in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Yet in spite of these, it flourished. Exports in 1726 amounted to about £1,000,000 and imports to about £900,000; and though the trade balance decreased in the three or four bad years that followed, it always remained in Ireland's favour. Destitution and poverty, however, continued to spread. Arable land was everywhere being turned into pasture, and the farmers turned adrift to beg for a living. The bogs were extending and the highways falling into disrepair. The chief sustenance of the peasants was often bonny-clabber—a mixture of cow's blood and flour. Hordes of beggars infested the country. In 1729, after the bad harvest of the previous year, there was famine even in the supposedly prosperous North. Riding through the countryside, said Swift, one would think one was in Lapland; and he doubts whether the

miserable-looking two-footed creatures who can be seen creeping about the peat-bogs belong to the human race.

In 1727 Archbishop Boulter, an Englishman, and sent over to defend the English interest, wrote the following account of Ireland. He is urging that a Bill to encourage the tilling of arable land should be framed. "When I went my visitation last year, barley in some inland places sold for 6s. a bushel to make bread of; and oatmeal (which is the bread of the north) sold for twice or thrice the usual price: and we met all the roads full of whole families that had left their homes to beg abroad, since their neighbours had nothing to relieve them with. And as the winter subsistence of the poor is chiefly potatoes, this scarcity drove the poor to begin with their potatoes before they were full-grown, so that they have lost half the benefit of them, and have spent their stock about two months sooner than usual; and oatmeal is at this distance from harvest, in many parts of this kingdom three times the customary price; so that this summer must be more fatal to us than the last, when I fear many hundreds perished by famine.

"Now, the occasion of this evil is, that many persons have had large tracts of land, on to 3000 or 4000 acres, and have stocked them with cattle and have no other inhabitants on their land than so many cottiers as are necessary to look after their sheep and black cattle; so that in some of the finest counties in many places there is neither house nor cornfield to be seen in ten or fifteen miles travelling: and daily in some counties, many gentlemen (as their leases fall into their hands) tye up their tenants from tillage; and this is one of the main causes why so many venture to go into foreign service at the hazard of their lives, if taken, because they can get no land to till at home. And if some stop be not put

to this evil we must daily decrease in the numbers of our people."[1]

When Boulter, who was accused of representing that Ireland was a prosperous country, could write in this way, what must one expect from Swift and Sheridan and the Brodricks? Swift, writing plainly and quietly, making no effort to excite passion, has these sentences (he is writing to a brother clergyman): "I think I once was in your county, Tipperary, which is like the rest of the whole kingdom, a bare face of nature, without houses or plantations; filthy cabins, miserable, tattered half-starved creatures, scarce in human shape; one insolent, ignorant, oppressive squire to be found in twenty miles riding; a parish church to be found only in a summer day's journey, in comparison of which, an English farmer's barn is a cathedral; a bog of fifteen miles round; every meadow a slough, and every hill a mixture of rock, heath, and marsh; and every male and female, from the farmer, inclusive to the day-labourer, infallibly a thief, and consequently a beggar, which in this island are terms convertible. . . . There is not an acre of land in Ireland turned to half its advantage, yet it is better improved than the people; and all these evils are the effects of English tyranny, so your sons and grandsons will find it to their sorrow."[2]

Every economist and statesman tried to find a remedy for this terrible destitution. One held that the chief cause of it was absenteeism. He showed that the Irish people made enough wealth to maintain itself in prosperity, but that half the annual income—about £600,000—was spent by fine ladies and gentlemen in London and Paris. It was not, in his opinion, the decrease of arable land that made Ireland poor; for what she

[1] Boulter's *Letters*, vol. i. p. 220.
[2] *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 312.

lost in corn and barley she made up in cattle, butter, tallow and hides; but the wrong expenditure of the proceeds of this rich trade.

Arthur Dobbs ascribed the poverty of Ireland to a variety of causes. One was the huge expenditure on wines and brandies—£173,458, 2s. 2d.—almost a fourth of the total imports; another was the indolence and viciousness of the native Irish, who left their parishes and wandered over the country, living on the industry of others, and exciting compassion by feigning broken limbs and horrible diseases. He would have a pump-room in the vault of every workhouse, in which those of them who refused to work would be compelled to pump in order to save themselves from drowning!

Swift was inclined to brush away contemptuously all schemes of reform but his own. He said scornfully that all the proposals for the betterment of Ireland were dreams except that they should cut down their expenses, wear clothes made out of their own stuffs, and stop importation of luxuries from England. This was not his whole mind on the matter; for he approved of a number of schemes for encouraging fisheries, cutting canals through the bogs, planting woods and repairing the highways. But like the tolling of a bell, he never ceased repeating that so long as the landlords spent their incomes in London, and the English Parliament enforced the Navigation Acts, it was only by a great moral effort of the Irish people themselves that their country could be saved.

"The directions for Ireland are very short and plain; to encourage agriculture and home consumption, and utterly discard all importations which are not absolutely necessary for health or life. And how few necessities, conveniencies, or even comforts of life, are

denied us by nature, or not to be attained by labour and industry! Are those detestable extravagancies of Flanders lace, English cloths of our own wool, and other goods, Italian or Indian silks, tea, coffee, chocolate, china-ware, and that profusion of wines, by the knavery of merchants growing dearer every season, with a hundred unnecessary fopperies, better known to others than to me: are these, I say, fit for us, any more than for the beggar who could not eat his veal without oranges? Is it not the highest indignity to human nature, that men should be such poltroons as to suffer the kingdom and themselves to be undone, by the vanity, the folly, the pride, and wantonness of their wives, who, under their present corruptions, seem to be a kind of animal, suffered, for our sins, to be sent into the world for the destruction of families, societies, and kingdoms; and whose whole study seems directed to be as expensive as they possibly can, in every useless article of living; who, by long practice, can reconcile the most pernicious foreign drugs to their health and pleasure, provided they are but expensive, as starlings grow fat with henbane; who contract a robustness by mere practice of sloth and luxury; who can play deep several hours after midnight, sleep beyond noon, revel upon Indian poisons, and spend the revenue of a moderate family to adorn a nauseous, unwholesome living carcase? Let those few who are not concerned in any part of this accusation, suppose it unsaid; let the rest take it among them. Gracious God, in His mercy, look down upon a nation so shamefully besotted!"[1]

Swift's remedy was economically unsound. Had Irish ladies refused to buy silks and muslins, and if they

[1] "Answer to Several Letters from Unknown Persons," *Works*, vol. vii. p. 124.

had drunk an infusion of sage instead of tea, and had used £20,000 of Irish linens instead of £20,000 of Belgian lutestrings for burial robes, Ireland would have been little better off; for the total imports of these luxuries did not amount in all to £100,000. It would have been more to the purpose to have flown into a rage at the luxuries of men—the £170,000 of wines and brandies and the £60,000 of tobacco. But this passage must not be judged from the point of view of the economist. Swift's rôle was not to explain economical principles but to make the Irish people realize that they could expect no mercy from England, and create a spirit of independence in them. That was the object of the violence that mounts to a frenzy in these words. Perhaps I should not say the object; for they are not the words of a preacher who has nicely calculated the lengths to which he must go in order to stir the apathy of his congregation. His anger carries him away, and that is why they are literature. They do not only tell us what arguments were used and what passions were excited in Dublin in 1730. They are volcanic, a stupendous outburst of the human heart.

Swift's Irish pamphlet that has burned itself most deeply into the memory of mankind was written at this time: *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to their Parents or Country and for making them Beneficial to the Public*. In it his humour assumes so grisly a form that to many it has seemed a wanton outrage on human life: the horror of it has concealed from them the fierce and righteous indignation that fashioned it. In his angry cynicism, they say, he has made sport on a nation's grave. This is a wrong reading. Perhaps if one stumble on it in isolation, it is the inevitable reading. But with some knowledge of Ireland at the time, its true significance, its mingled wrath and

pity, cannot be missed. Many were dying of famine; the highways were crowded with beggars in rags; the farms were deserted; the taverns crowded; yet in winter the fine people in Dublin danced the winter away as if Ireland were a palace of untold wealth, and in summer caracoled across the countryside, picnicking on green sward to the sound of softly running water. It was at this state of things Swift expressed his revulsion in the hopelessness, contempt and savagery of his *Modest Proposal*.

The *Answer to the Craftsman*—an ironical attack on the Government's encouragement of French and Spanish recruiting officers in Ireland—is equally powerful, though it does not drip with blood. From 1690 Irishmen had taken service in large numbers in the Catholic armies of Europe. No difficulties had been put in their way by the English Government, who stupidly welcomed their departure, forgetting that they all burned with the desire to return in arms to their native land. But if the ministers in London encouraged this practice, the Protestants in Ireland, high and low, strongly objected; and wherever a foreign agent showed himself too openly he was ill-treated by the mob. But the London ministers paid no attention to these disturbances, and in September 1730 allowed a Colonel Hennecy to recruit for the French army in Ireland, and asked Archbishop Boulter to give him assistance and protection. Boulter warned them that mischief would result, perhaps another Wood's halfpence revolt.[1] But there actually was very little trouble; for, as soon as his arrival was known, feeling became so inflamed that he had to leave the country in haste.

In England Bolingbroke got wind of the Government's action, and denounced it as iniquitous in the

[1] Boulter's *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 30.

Craftsman. Swift ironically replied in this tract. He protested that the *Craftsman* was hindering the welfare of Ireland. The English Parliament had stopped the Irish wool trade and the trade in cattle, and now when it had allowed trade in live men, he, like a busybody, had to interfere. The King of France might have taken 3000 men, the King of Spain another 3000—in all 6000 men; and allowing £5 a year for the maintenance of a lean hungry Irishman, this would have been a saving of £30,000 a year to the country. If these two monarchs had gone to war, they would soon have been killed off, and another 6000 required to fill their places. In a short time the population would have decreased to its proper size, 8800 families, say 67,200 souls, who would have lived contentedly on their potato patches and tended the cattle of the rich English graziers. An annual draught of any surplus might have been sent to America to act as a screen to His Majesty's subjects against the savage Indians. A standing army would have been necessary to keep these wild herdsmen in order—perhaps 20,000 men, though with their bastards and trulls they would have numbered as many as the natives. Its cost would have been boggled at, but it would have served a double purpose—kept out the Pretender as well as kept down the wild Irish.

In a sense this tract need not have been written; for the monstrosity of the proposal to allow Colonel Hennecy to recruit men for the French army in Ireland was apparent to every one but the ministers in England: without a word from Swift he would have been hurried out of the country. But he seized the occasion to cover yet again with discredit not only the distant Government in London, but those officials in Dublin who had been its unwilling agents.

4

In his pamphlets on the Irish trade laws and on Irish social conditions and in the *Drapier's Letters*, Swift was one of the first champions of Ireland. This is generally admitted. Henry Grattan said that from Swift he had obtained the principles which had guided his political life. In his speech on April 16, 1782, in which, conscious of immediate triumph, he demanded that the Irish Parliament and the Irish Law Courts should be freed from the jurisdiction of England, he called on the shade of Swift to witness the accomplishment of his desires: "I found Ireland on her knees, I watched over her with eternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms and from arms to liberty! Spirit of Swift! Spirit of Molyneux! your genius has prevailed. Ireland is now a nation."[1]

Swift's pamphlets roused the Protestant ascendency to a sense of the injustices which they had suffered from England. A quarter of a century before they began to appear, Molyneux's book had kindled their indignation; but it did not become a blaze till Swift wrote the *Drapier's Letters*. It was the same fire which, kept alive and fed by patriots like Lucas, Antony Malone, Hussey de Burgh, Berkeley, Flood and Grattan, in 1782, swept for a few years Dublin Castle rule from Ireland, and made the Irish Protestants at least a free people.

Had he any share in shaping the ideal of a free Ireland, ruled by itself in its own interest? Is there anything in common between him and those who from the Repeal of the Union battled for Irish liberty? "No," is the answer generally given to these questions; but ought it not to be "Yes"?

[1] *The Select Speeches of the Right Hon. Henry Grattan*, Dublin, 1845, p. 82.

Even Molyneux, contrary to what is usually said, was the advocate of the whole Irish people. He always speaks, indeed, as if the independent kingdom of Ireland consisted of Englishmen or the descendants of Englishmen; but he gives himself away when he makes the curious statement, which he must have known to be untrue, that only one in a thousand of the population were native Irish. That is to say, he presents the people living in Ireland as united in their demand for independence.[1] For the time being he sinks the difference between the English settler and the native. It is the Irish people that seeks redress through him.

Swift in his Fourth Letter to the Whole People of Ireland declares that by "the whole people" he means the descendants of those who reduced the kingdom to obedience. It is they, he says, who oppose the entrance of Wood's coin, not the Irish, though they will probably do so when they are asked. But as he proceeds one feels that this is a "blind," like Molyneux's saying that only one in a thousand of the people of Ireland belongs to the old stock. With his mind full of the ignorance, servility and destitution of the "native Irish" he insensibly begins to speak for them. In such sentences as these he had the whole people of Ireland in his mind. "A people long used to hardships, lose by degrees the very notions of liberty, they look upon themselves as creatures at mercy, and that all impositions laid on them by a stronger hand are—legal and obligatory. Hence proceeds that poverty and lowness of spirit, to which a kingdom may be subject as well as a particular person. And when Esau came fainting from the field at the point to die, it is no wonder that he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage."

And in so far as Swift himself did not fight for the

[1] *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England Stated*, Dublin, 1749, pp. 14–16.

rights of the whole Irish people, his books fought for him. "Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are." "All government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery," Swift wrote to his fellow-Protestants. But his words kindled a flame in the breasts of his Roman Catholic countrymen also. One of Grattan's arguments for the removal of disabilities from Roman Catholics was that Protestants could not protest against the violation of their rights and at the same time infringe those of their countrymen. "What are your public tracts, your repeated addresses to the King, the Speaker's annual speech to the throne? What are they, while the penal code remains, but so many dangerous and inflammatory publications, felicitating the Protestants on the blessings of that constitution from whence three-fourths of your people are excluded; but, above all, that instrument infinitely more incendiary than all Mr. Paine has written, that instrument which you annually vote; what is it but a challenge to rebellion? I mean a money bill, wherein you dispose of the money of 3,000,000 of the people without their consent. You do not stir, nor vote, nor speak, without suggesting to the Catholics some motive; either the provocation of your blessings or the poison of your free principles. . . . You are struggling with difficulties, you imagine; you are mistaken; you are struggling with impossibilities—to enchain the mind, to case in the volatile essential soul. Nor tower, nor dungeon, much less parliament, can be retentive of those fires kindled by yourselves in the breasts of your fellow-subjects."[1]

There was an instrument more potent than Mr. Paine's book that Grattan does not name—the *Drapier's Letters*.

[1] *Grattan's Speeches, op. cit.* p. 216.

CHAPTER VII

Intimate Life

Swift did not always live in the public eye. He spent the summer of 1722 walking and riding in the north of Ireland, and in the course of it he travelled six hundred miles and slept in thirty beds. It does not seem to have upset his good humour that in some of these he was troubled by the itch. In 1723 he wandered over the whole of southern Ireland, going as far south as Skull near Mizen Head. Again and again he spent weeks and months among the lakes at Gaulston in West Meath, the Venice of Ireland, and at Woodbroke in the Queen's County. When in Dublin he regularly visited many places in the beautiful surrounding country—Delville, Dr. Delany's villa near Glasnevin; Belcamp, the home of the Grattans; and Celbridge, near Dublin, where Esther Vanhomrigh lived. His journeys on his horse Bolingbroke, from Dublin to Trim and from Trim to Dublin, were innumerable.

Swift took his first long walks while living at Moor Park. "During his mother's lifetime," says Orrery, "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."[1] In Ireland he was reputed to be the best walker in Dublin and five miles round. In London he was often forced to content himself with a

[1] Orrery, p. 21.

hard walk of an hour or two through the streets or in the Park: it struck him as amusing that he should do this to make himself lean while Prior did the same to make himself fat. When staying at Chelsea in the "violent burning weather" of the summer of 1711, he made the journey into town whenever it was fine; the result being that his health improved, he sweated less, gave over tottering, and walked as firm as a cock. He would sit with Harley till midnight, then set out by moonlight up Pall Mall, through the Park, out at Buckingham House and so to Chelsea a little beyond the Church, two good miles, just five thousand and forty-eight steps.[1] In the "mad heat" of the June evenings of that year he added swimming to walking; he used to go down to the river, and while Patrick warned off passing boats, or failed to warn them off, swim about for half an hour. "I have been swimming this half hour and more; and when I was coming out I dived, to make my head and all through wet, like a cold bath; but as I dived the napkin fell off and is lost, and I have that to pay for. O faith, the great stones were so sharp, I could hardly set my feet on them as I came out. It was pure and warm. I got to bed and will now go sleep."

More than once Swift and his early biographers suggest that he regarded his walks and rides and travels as a kind of sacrifice to ill-health, as a martyrdom to be endured in the hope of staving off the decay of his body and mind. He writes to Pope in 1730 that he repines at walking and riding so much, that he thinks it ill husbandry and would rather sit still; but that the dread of pain and torture makes him toil to preserve health from hand to mouth as a labourer does to preserve life. Delany says that there was something frenzied in his manner of taking exercise, and that if it saved him from

[1] *Journal to Stella*, Letters for May and June, 1711.

some illnesses, it brought others on him. "He walked erect; and the constant and free discharges by perspiration from exercise, kept him clear of coughs and rheums and other offensive infirmities of old age. But he carried this contention (as he was apt to do every other) too far. . . . This incessant and intemperate exercise naturally wasted his flesh and exhausted the oil of his blood."[1] Mrs. Pilkington tells how on wet days he used frantically to rush up and down the stairs of the Deanery in order to complete his exercise for the day. Now it is true that there were times when his fierce determination to walk or ride or run so many paces became a tyranny. But it is absurd to suppose that this was generally true of his exercise. When he urged Stella and Vanessa "to wear out pattens and spare potions," to walk and ride, because these were the cheapest of all drugs, he was not laying a penance upon them. In Dublin in his later years he was often miserable and despairing; he wished that his fortune had placed him anywhere else; he could hardly tolerate its best company. But once away to Quilca or Market Hill or Gaulston he was himself again: out in the cold and wet, wrapped in a great-coat, inspecting labourers, digging up and breaking stones, building dry walls and cutting through bogs. When a friend visited him he would lead him a walk of eight or nine miles, and to show his agility compete with him in leaping ditches. He was under no tyranny at such times.

From the middle of April to the end of September 1724, he, Stella and Mrs. Dingley stayed at Quilca, a house, or cabin as he called it, belonging to his friend Sheridan, eight miles from the nearest post-station, Kells. (It is about three miles from Virginia on the main road from Cavan to Dublin.) The weather was worse than he

[1] Delany, p. 147.

had ever known: Stella said it would rain till Michaelmas. The fires smoked; rain came through the roof into the ladies' room; turves were hard to get, and when got were damp; the mutton was lean, and the Irish servants lazy and thievish. He commenced to write, "The Blunders, Deficiencies and Misfortunes of Quilca, Proposed to contain one-and-twenty volumes in quarto." Yet in spite of a million inconveniences he found that wild place agreeable. And it is no wonder; for, as a young farmer from whom I asked the direction, said to me, Quilca is the loveliest place in the world. The farmhouse is small—a window on each side of the front door and three small windows in the upper storey—and nestles in a dip of ground surrounded by great trees. On one side there is a field of about an acre in size which slopes gently down to a little lake of the same extent; and beyond that, open country with fields of hay, a patch or two of black bog and a few white cottages. All round are high-lying, little, rather bare fields, sloping at all angles, dotted with cocks of hay, and enclosed by shaggy hedges; and over all an immense dome of sky up which the heavy white clouds slowly mount. Quilca is the heart of warm, sleepy Ireland. "Suer," wrote Spenser, "it is yett a most bewtifull and sweete Country as any is under heaven, seamed throughout with many godlie rivers, replenished with all sortes of fishe most aboundantlie: sprinkled with verie many sweete Ilandes and goodlie lakes, like little inland seas." Swift felt that too.

A phrase in Orrery's account of Swift's walks reminds one of his liking for "low life." "He generally chose to dine with waggoners, hostlers and persons of that rank; and he used to lie at night at the houses where he found written over the door, 'Lodgings for a penny.' He delighted in scenes of low life." And "low life" attracted

him not only in youth when an empty purse forced him to become acquainted with it, but in middle and old age also. Men so different as Prior, Thomas Warton, Rousseau, Scott, and to name a character from fiction who represents a modern point of view, M. Bergeret, have shared his taste, though each with a characteristic difference. Swift did not so completely unbend as Prior and Warton, make himself one with the printers, gardeners and masons with whom he conversed, and find purification in feeling himself one, not of a class, but of humanity. He always remembered his superior position, and some of his pleasure came from the contrast between his greatness and the humble position of his companions. One feels this when he says that he loves to be a "scoundrel and a prince" on the same day, to go reeking from a blind chophouse and a tenpenny dinner of gill ale, bad broth and three mutton chops, to a minister of state.

Thackeray, in *Henry Esmond*, describes Swift visiting the printer of the *Post-Boy* and addressing his hero, whom he took for an under-spur-leather, with intolerable insolence. " 'Who the devil are ye, sir?' cries the Doctor; 'are ye a printer's man, or are ye not?'—he pronounced it like *naught*.

" 'Your Reverence needn't raise the devil to ask who I am,' says Colonel Esmond.—'Did you ever hear of Doctor Faustus, Tommy' (here he spoke to the printer's child, whom he held on his knee), 'or Friar Bacon, who invented gunpowder and set the Thames on fire?'

"Mr. Swift turned quite red, almost purple. 'I did not intend any offence, sir,' says he.

" 'I dare say, sir, you offended without meaning,' says the other dryly.

" 'Who are ye, sir? Do you know who I am, sir? You are one of the pack of Grub Street scribblers that my

friend Mr. Secretary hath laid by the heels. How dare ye, sir, speak to me in this tone?' cries the Doctor in a great fume."[1]

This is an imaginary incident. Swift was not insolent and arrogant in this way. Yet when he unbent himself to ordinary men he always had it at the back of his mind that he was Jonathan to the two great ministers of the Queen. A passage in the *Journal to Stella* describes the meeting with his cousin Leach, the printer of the *Postman*, on which Thackeray based the incident in *Esmond*. "I dined to-day with Patty Rolt at my cousin Leach's, with a pox, in the city: he is a printer, and prints the *Postman*, oh oh, and is my cousin, God knows how, and he married Mrs. Baby Aires of Leicester; and my cousin Thompson was with us: and my cousin Leach offers to bring me acquainted with the author of the *Postman*, and says, he does not doubt but the gentleman will be glad of my acquaintance, and that he is a very ingenious man and a great scholar and has been beyond sea. But I was modest, and said, may be the gentleman was shy, and not fond of new acquaintance; and so put it off: and I wish you could hear me repeating all I have said of this in its proper tone, just as I am writing it. It is all with the same cadence with oh hoo, or as when little girls say, I have got an apple, miss, and I won't give you some."[2] This is not the insolent blusterer of Esmond, yet it is the voice of one who got some cheap pleasure by remembering his own greatness.

Many of his friends were men of wealth and high position, the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Berkeley, the Duke of Ormond, and the Dukes and Lords, supporters of Harley and St. John, who were admitted to the Brothers' Club. Throughout his whole life, as he loved

[1] *Henry Esmond*, bk. iii. ch. 5.

[2] "Journal to Stella," *Works*, vol. ii. p. 40.

to boast, he was on a free and independent footing with a large circle of noblemen. In no other writer's life has genius so well filled the place of a blue ribbon and a coach and six.

In his *Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation*, Swift probably reflects on his social conversation with the great. He puts bad talkers into three or four classes: haranguers, story-tellers, those who show inattention to what others say in their eagerness to follow up their own thoughts, those who try to draw all eyes upon themselves by disporting like hired buffoons. The chief mark of the good talker is that he strives to understand what his companions say and to answer them fittingly. He is not often fluent; for fluency often signifies that a man has but one set of ideas. The cream of his conversation is raillery; that is, he says something that at first appears a reproach or reflection, but by some turn of wit, unexpected and surprising, he ends always with a compliment, and to the advantage of the person addressed.

The Journal to Stella gives some glimpses into his practice of this art. "*December* 31, 1710.—Well, I dined with Mr. Harley, and came away at six; there was much company, and I was not merry at all. Mr. Harley made me read a paper of verses of Prior's. I read them plain without any fine manner, and Prior swore I should never read any of his again; but he would be revenged and read some of mine as bad. I excused myself, and said I was famous for reading verses the worst in the world, and that everybody snatched them from me when I offered to begin."[1] Yet, more often than not, his wit in conversation had a sting. Colonel Hill, brother of Mrs. Masham, gave him a beautiful tortoise-shell snuff-box. Harley admired the workmanship of it, but spying a figure studded on the outside of the bottom of the box

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 87.

somewhat like a goose, he said to Swift: "Jonathan, the colonel, I think, has made a goose of you." "Yes, my Lord," replied Swift, "but if you will look further, you will see I am driving a snail before me"—a hit at Harley's habit of procrastination.[1]

Had he never written a line his name would have been preserved in Irish tradition by two or three of his ironic repartees. On one occasion, when Lord Carteret was arguing against him with "mastery and strength of reason," Swift cried out in what Delany calls "a violent passion": "What the vengeance brought you amongst us, get you gone, get you gone; pray God Almighty, send us our boobies again."[2] At a sheriff's feast the sheriff proposed the toast to him, "Mr. Dean, the Trade of Ireland." Swift answered quick, "Sir, I drink no memories."[3]

Shortly after Swift came to London in 1710 he began to dine every Saturday night with Harley, a custom in which was laid the foundations of a friendship which lasted through the lives of both. The chief monument to it is the masterpiece of burlesque:

'Tis (let me see) three years and more,
(October next it will be four),
Since Harley bid me first attend,
And chose me for an humble friend;
Would take me in his coach to chat,
And question me of this and that;
As "What's o'clock?" and, "How's the wind?"
"Whose chariot's that we left behind?"
Or gravely try to read the lines
Writ underneath the country signs;
And mark at Brentford how they spell
Hear is good Eal and Bear to cell.
Or, "Have you nothing new to-day
To shew from Parnell, Pope and Gay?"

[1] Deane Swift's *Essay*, p. 164.
[2] Delany, p. 25. [3] Delany, p. 214.

Such tattle often entertains
My lord and me as far as Staines,
As once a week we travel down
To Windsor, and again to town;
Where all that passes *inter nos*,
Might be proclaimed at Charing Cross.[1]

In June 1711 was founded the Brothers' Club, a kind of second Kit-Cat Club. Its members were men eminent in rank or in office, and pledged themselves to support wit and letters. Each brother in turn had to bear the cost of its weekly meetings. Swift soon became dissatisfied with it. He grumbled at the expense he was put to in entertaining his noble "brothers," and disliked their hard-drinking habits. Still, he found the club a useful means of pushing the interests of his many protégés, and with some of the members he claimed acquaintanceship throughout the rest of his life.

Swift's first literary friends in London were Whigs like Addison and Steele, but from these, to his distress, he became gradually estranged. He was more and more thrown in with the politician, ambassador and poet, Matthew Prior, and with Queen Anne's doctor, a man with an odd, dry, humorous turn that pleased him immensely, Arbuthnot. In the spring of 1714, while waiting for the collapse of the Oxford-Bolingbroke Government, he and Arbuthnot, with the assistance of three young poets of Tory inclinations to whom he had given his support—Gay, Pope and Parnell—founded the Scriblerus Club to carry on the attacks on the new criticism and new scholarship made in *A Tale of a Tub* by editing the works of the mythical German-born pedant, Martin Scriblerus, a Don Quixote or rather a Hudibras of learning. It can have met only two or three

[1] "Imitation of Part of the Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace," *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 169.

times, but it was the birthplace of several books. *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Dunciad* and *Gulliver's Travels* all came from it.

After 1714 all its members never met together again, but it was reconstituted by correspondence. For four or five years Swift regarded himself as an exile with no hope. His political life seemed at an end. Those to whom he had been most closely related in England were exiles like himself or prisoners. But about 1720 his energies revived. He was writing *Gulliver's Travels*. He threw himself into the struggle for the salvation of Irish trade. Life again held possibilities for him. And it was just then that he began to write frequently to Pope, Gay and Bolingbroke. He welcomed enthusiastically the opening of this correspondence. It gave him pleasure to come into touch with the old London life, which he looked back to with so much regret. He welcomed it, too, because in his letters to them he could express a side of himself which was cribbed and confined in Ireland. He had many able and learned friends, but they were not his peers. For one reason and another, at any rate, he never seriously expressed to them that dark pessimism which lay at the back of his mind. Perhaps this was just a matter of habit. Every one knows that one may be on the most familiar terms with another, and never speak of religion or philosophy or any ultimate things except in a humorous aside or sly half-sentence. Writing to Pope and Bolingbroke, Swift got into the habit of letting himself go. Not that in their answers they show any extraordinary comprehension of his mind. Pope's are laboured and written in a spirit of vanity; Bolingbroke's are pretentious and shallow. But for Swift they formed that ideal imaginary audience, writing for which he never felt himself cramped in mind or in word. All the famous

pessimistic passages occur in letters to them: how that he would anger the world if he could do it in safety; how that he loves Counsellor Such-a-one and Judge Such-a-one, but principally hates and detests that animal called man; how that he is no more angry with Walpole than he was with the kite which flew away with one of his chickens, though he was pleased next day when one of his servants shot it.

On Swift's arrival in Ireland, though the people of Dublin were hostile and though his cathedral clergy and Archbishop made things difficult, he yet had the consolation of finding himself in the midst of a circle of clever and witty men: Dr. Grattan and his six sons; St. George Ashe, who had been Swift's tutor at Trinity College, and his brothers; Daniel Jackson, Dr. Delany, Thomas Sheridan and the Vicar-Choral of Christ Church and Dean's, vicar of St. Patrick's, the Reverend John Worrall. To these attached themselves many others — Charles Ford, the confidant of both Stella and Vanessa; Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson, at whose house he wrote some of his best familiar verse; Knightly Chetwode, a known Tory and disaffected person.

No better account of these Irish friends can be given than Delany's in his *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift.*[1] Lord Orrery had said that Swift in Ireland had surrounded himself with low flatterers. Delany replied:

"The meanest man I ever heard of his conversing with during this period was Mr. Worrall, a clergyman, a Master of Arts, a reader, and a vicar of his cathedral and master of the song. He was nearly of his own standing in the college; a good walker, a man of sense, and a great deal of humour. He was married to a woman

[1] First published 1754, pp. 91–5.

of great vivacity, good-nature, and generosity; remarkably cleanly and elegant in her person, in her house, and at her table, where she entertained her friends with singular cheerfulness, hospitality, and good humour.

"Mr. Worrall's situation in the church, naturally engaged his attendance upon the Dean every time he went thither; and their walks naturally ended, either in the Dean's dining with him, or he with the Dean. But as the Dean was a single man, the former happened more frequently: and this intercourse at last ended in the Dean's dining with him as often as he pleased, at a certain rate; and inviting as many friends as he pleased, upon the same terms. . . .

"The Dean's next acquaintance that I shall take notice of (but whether prior or subsequent in point of time I cannot say) was in a family well known in Ireland, by the name of the Grattans. They were seven brothers, the sons of a venerable and well-beloved clergyman, Doctor Grattan, who gave them all liberal education: and, at the same time, as I have often heard the old Bishop of Clogher declare, kept hospitality beyond both the Lords who lived on either side of him; tho' both reputed hospitable. One of these brothers was an eminent physician, another an eminent merchant, who died Lord-mayor of the city of Dublin; the youngest was first a fellow of the college of Dublin, and after master of the great free-school at Enniskillen. The eldest was a justice of the peace, who lived reputably upon his patrimony in the country. The three other brothers were clergymen of good characters, and competently provided for in the Church. Two of them Swift found in his cathedral; nothing was more natural than that he should cultivate an acquaintance with them. A set of men, as generally acquainted, and as much beloved, as any one family in the nation. Nay to such a degree, that

some of the most considerable men in the Church desired, and thought it a favour to be adopted by them, and admitted Grattans.[1]

"These, my Lord, were men of open hearts, and free spirits: who as little deserved, and as much disdained, the character and office of sycophants, as any nobleman of yours, or any nation. And yet these, with their allies the Jacksons, etc., genteel, agreeable, and well-bred men and women, were the companions of many of Swift's easiest and happiest hours: such companions as no wise man ever wanted, or at least would want, if he could help it; any more than he would his night-gown, his couch, or his easy-chair: which never were deemed the least useful, nor are they always the least ornamental parts of dress and furniture.

"The Grattans had a little house and their cousin Jackson another, near the city; where they cultivated good humour and cheerfulness, with their trees and fruits and sallets (for they were all well skilled in gardening and planting), and kept hospitality, after the example of their fathers."

Of the member of the Trinity College circle who, from 1720 onwards, was closest to Swift, Thomas Sheridan, Delany says: "He had a faculty and, indeed, a felicity of throwing out hints, and materials of mirth and humour, beyond any man I ever knew. If he were not the stanchest hound in the pack, he was at least the best starter."

Thomas Sheridan on graduating from Trinity College set up a school in Dublin, which rapidly became

[1] Delany, pp. 91–5. Of these Grattans—fathers of even more famous sons—Swift wrote that they were governors of all Ireland and that an army of 12,000 men could not stand against them. *Correspondence*, vol. v. p. 165, April 15, 1735.

very prosperous. His income from it amounted to £800, and with this and the revenue from the estate at Quilca in Co. Cavan which had come to him through his wife, and the proceeds of livings he held at various times, he had in all at one period an income of about £1200. He spent it freely and carelessly, keeping open house, giving private concerts, lodging poor scholars and sending them to the university at his own expense.

The daring of his wit, the brilliance of his scholarship and his ingenuous character attracted Swift. A close friendship began between the two. Swift advised him and aided him in all the troubles that his circumstances and the faults of his character created. When he was presented to the living of Rincurran near Cork, Swift urged him to act like a man of the world, to learn the extent of his parish, the general quantity of arable land and pasture, the common rate of tithes for an acre of the several sorts of corn, and of fleeces and lambs. Inadvertency and forgetfulness and lolling in bed till noon reading Homer, he must have done with. When Sheridan got into trouble by preaching in Cork Cathedral on the anniversary of George I.'s accession to the throne from the text "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," Swift did his utmost to restore him to favour with Dublin Castle; and pursued the person who brought the mistake to the ears of the Lord-Lieutenant in a series of virulent poems.

Swift found his side of the account in the amusement he got from Sheridan's wit. Like Swift he was a master at puns, "bites," and "lies."[1] They agreed to write to

[1] In 1719, the year in which he became acquainted with Swift, he published an Art of Punning: "*Ars Punica, sive Flos Linguarum*: The Art of Punning; or the Flower of Languages: In Seventy-Nine Rules: For the Further Improvement of Conversation and Help of Memory. By the Labour and Industry of Tom Punsibi." Among his rules are the following:

each other in verse every day for a whole year, and were upon honour not to take up more than five minutes in composing each letter. At another time their aim was to make their letters to one another enigmas. They sometimes wrote in Latin, using only out-of-the-way words: "Amicus noster catulaster lepidissimus hominum

Rule 1. The Capital Rule. He that puns must have a head for it. That is, he must be a man of letters of a sprightly and fine imagination whatever men may think of his judgement. Like Dr. ——, who said when a Lady threw down his Cremona Fiddle with a Frisk of her manteau: "Mantua vae miserae nimium vicina Cremonae."

Rule 6. The Rule of Pun upon Pun. All Puns made upon the word Pun are to be esteemed as so much Old Gold. Ex. Gr. Suppose two Famous Punsters should contend for the superiority, and one should say, "This is a Carthaginian War."

Q. How, Sir?

A. Why, Sir, it is a Pun-ick War.

Rule 7. The Socratick Rule is to instruct others by way of Question and Answer.

Q. Who was the first Drawer?

A. Potifer.

Q. Which is the seat of the spleen?

A. The Hipps.

Q. Who were the first bakers?

A. The Crustumenians.

The Preface ends in a vein which Swift was frequently to work:

Having now from the best Authorities proved the Antiquity and Excellence of the Art of Punning, nothing remains but to give some general directions how this science is to be taught.

1. Let the husband teach his wife to read it.

2. Let her be appointed to teach her children.

3. Let the head servant of the Family instruct all the rest, and that every morning before the Master and Mistress are up.

4. The Masters and Misses are to repeat a rule every Day with the examples and every visiting Day be brought up to shew the Company what fine Memories they have.

5. They must go Ten Times through the Book before they be allowed to aim at a Punn.

6. They must every Day of their Lives repeat Six Synonimous

misere vivit in domuncula vescarum plena, proficiebus pascitur, operando strigans et conquinescens et turundis pullos pascit in tuguriolo serphorum pleno." Sometimes they split up the English words so that they resembled Latin: "A lac a de mi illinc ducis in it, is notabit fit fora a de an." Swift and Sheridan took as much pleasure in these things as children do in Chinese puzzles.

Sheridan's son tells many stories of their wild exploits together—how, for instance, disguised as a blind fiddler, Swift, with his father, took part in a beggars' merry-making, and how, on another occasion, they arranged that Swift should appear to be a clumsy and ill-mannered clergyman. But what throws most light on this friendship are the verses Sheridan wrote describing a visit of Swift to his house. As they are not given in modern editions of Swift's poems, I quote them in full:

When to my house you come, dear Dean,
Your humble friend to entertain,
Thro' dirt and mire along the street,
You find no scraper for your feet;
At which you stamp and storm and swell,
Which serves to clean your feet as well.
By steps ascending to the hall,
All torn to rags by boys and ball,
With scatter'd fragments on the floor;
A sad uneasy parlour door,
Besmear'd with chalk, and carv'd with knives,
(A plague upon all careless wives)

Words, or Words like in Sound, before they be allowed to sit down to dinner. Such as:

Assent.	Ascent.
A Lass.	Alas.
Barck.	Barque.
Alter.	Altar.
A Peer.	Appear.

7. If any Eldest Son has not a Capacity to attain to this Science let him be Disinherited as Non Compos and the Estate given to the next hopeful child.

Are the next sights you must expect,
But do not think they are my neglect.
Ah, that these evils were the worst!
The parlour still is farther curst.
To enter there if you advance,
If in you get, it is by chance.
How oft by turns have you and I
Said thus: "let me—no—let me try—
This turn will open it, I'll engage"—
You push me from it in a rage.
Turning, twisting, forcing, fumbling,
Stamping, staring, fuming, grumbling,
At length it opens—in we go . . .
How glad are we to find it so!
Conquests thro' pains and dangers please,
Much more than those attain'd with ease.
Are you dispos'd to take a seat;
The instant that it feels your weight,
Out go its legs and down you come
Upon your reverend Deanship's bum.
Betwixt two stools 'tis often said,
The sitter on the ground is laid;
What praise then to my chairs is due,
Where one performs the feat of two!
Now to the fire, if such there be,
At present nought but smoke we see.
Come, stir it up—ho—Mr. Joker,
How can I stir it without poker?
The bellows take, their batter'd nose
Will serve for poker, I suppose.
Now you begin to rake—alack,
The grate has tumbled from its back—
The coals all on the hearth are laid.
"Stay, Sir . . . I'll run and call the maid;
She'll make the fire again complete,—
She knows the humour of the grate."
Pox take your maid, and you together—
This is cold comfort in cold weather.
Now all is right again—the blaze
Suddenly rais'd as soon decays.
Once more apply the bellows—"So—
These bellows were not made to blow.—
Their leathern lungs are in decay,
They can't even puff the smoke away."

And is your Reverence vext at that?
Get up in God's name, take your hat;
Hang them, say I, that have no shift;
Come, blow the fire, good Doctor Swift.
If trifles such as these can tease you,
Plague take these fools that strive to please you.
Therefore no longer be a quarr'ler
Either with me, Sir, or my parlour.
If you can relish ought of mine,
A bit of meat, a glass of wine,
You're welcome to it, and you shall fare
As well as dining with the Mayor.
"You saucy scab—you tell me so—
Why, booby-face, I'd have you know
I'd rather see your things in order,
Than dine in state with the Recorder.
For water I must keep a clutter,
Or chide your wife for stinking butter.
Or getting such a deal of meat,
As if you'd half the town to eat.
That wife of yours, the Devil's in her,
I've told her of this way of dinner,
Five hundred times, but all in vain.—
Here comes a rump of beef again:
Oh, that that wife of yours would burst,—
Get out, and serve the boarders first.
Pox take 'em all for me—I fret
So much, I shall not eat my meat—
You know I'd rather have a slice."
I know, dear Sir, you are not nice;
You'll have your dinner in a minute,
Here comes the plate and slices in it—
Therefore no more, but take your place—
Do you fall to, and I'll say grace.[1]

Swift's relationships with his friends have often been made the occasion of severe attacks on his character. Lord Orrery said in 1752 that in Ireland he surrounded himself with low flatterers. Thackeray says that he would

[1] *The Life of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's*, Dublin. By Thomas Sheridan, A.M. The Second Edition. London, 1787, pp. 382–4.

not have liked to be one of his friends; and blames him for treating mercilessly those who thwarted him or were inferior to him, and for showing cowardice and bad temper when any one confronted him boldly. Many stories can be told that support Thackeray's opinion: and though some of them may be apocryphal and others highly coloured, they are too numerous to be lightly set aside. Undoubtedly Swift was at times overbearing and imperious. Sir Walter Scott represents him as a giant among the pygmies, a Gulliver among the Lilliputians, who brooding on the strange issues of life, unconsciously treated the little creatures in his power more roughly than he intended. But Swift's harshness was not always unpremeditated.

In considering the stories that give ground for these accusations, it is necessary to make distinctions between Swift's early, middle and late life; and when this is done, it will be found that those that reveal him as inhuman and cruel, those that give any real justification for Thackeray's caricature,[1] refer to his last years. In his London days his pride manifested itself chiefly in his bustling about with self-importance at Harley's levee and insisting that Harley, the Lord Treasurer, should make advances to the poet Parnell and subscribe to Pope's Translation of the *Iliad*. On one occasion he ordered Lady Burlington to sing to him, and when half-afraid and half-astonished she refused, he browbeat her till she burst into tears and left the room; but when on their next meeting he gave the same command, she assented with a smile. This may seem insufferable, but Lord Burlington laughed and did not turn Swift out of doors as a boor and a brute. It was merely a jest, the fee he demanded before he would make sport for Lord Burlington's or any lord's amusement.

[1] *Henry Esmond*, bk. i. ch. iii., and *The English Humorists*, 1853.

After he had been some years in Ireland, Swift's pride and contempt hardened. He was at his ease with the Grattans and the Ashes and Tom Sheridan; he read Lucretius with them and talked Irish politics, and sometimes ran riot in their company in the furious game of *Vive la Bagatelle*. But, after all, he counted them beef-and-mutton acquaintances; and though he says that they are better everyday companions than the lords and poets he once knew, there is contempt in the phrase. Besides, even if he had not been King of Dublin, his position as Dean of St. Patrick's was sufficient to thicken the snobbery in his blood: he was one of that race of men, who, when they bend their heads beneath the lintels of poor men's cottages, cannot but remember their Jovian superiority. Once he dined with the family of a gentleman farmer near Quilca. To do honour to him the farmer's wife dressed in her best apparel. Swift saluted her as if she had been a Duchess, and then, after some high-flown compliments, said to the farmer that he supposed he had some considerable estate. "Estate," answered he, "Devil a foot of land belongs to me or any of my generation. I have a pretty good lease here indeed." "Well," continued Swift, "but when am I to see Mrs. Reilly?" "Why, don't you see her there before you?" "That Mrs. Reilly? Impossible! I have heard she is a prudent woman, and as such would never dress herself out in silks and other ornaments fit only for Ladies of fashion." Mrs. Reilly, says Sheridan, who tells the story, happened to be a woman of good sense, and taking the hint, immediately withdrew and changed her dress.[1] A modern Mrs. Reilly would not be so complacent. But one must remember that the incident took place on a remote Irish farm in the early eighteenth century, and that the principal actor in it was the Dean

[1] *The Life of Doctor Swift.* By Thomas Sheridan, 1787, p. 349.

of St. Patrick's, whose concern for good morals and decent ways of living were as famous as his eccentricities and genius.

After 1730 Swift became a tyrant. New acquaintances gathered round him, many of them mere flatterers anxious to enjoy a little of the sunshine of his popularity. With them he kept up a wild clatter of mirth, ordering his servants for a whim to carry the roast back to the kitchen, making his poor friends drink his wine and waiting at his own table. All went well so long as his guests moved smilingly at his command. But if he was crossed, if some one refused to accept his tyranny and answered wit with wit, he got into a towering passion. His staunch friend, Thomas Sheridan, was able to play David to his Saul for a time, to cross his track with new pieces of fun and lead him from his anger. But later even Sheridan had no influence over him. In 1735, on his way to Cavan, he stayed at the inn at Virginia near Loch Ramor, and seeing a maid scraping a piece of beef he asked her how many maggots she had got out of it. She answered: "Not as many as there are in your head." This made him so angry that he complained of her to her mistress and insisted that she should be discharged. When he reached Cavan, the Burgesses came out to meet him, and the elder Burgess delivered a complimentary address. "Pray, Sir," asked Swift, "are you the Town-Serjeant?" "No, Mr. Dean," answered Sheridan, "that is Mr. Brooks, the apothecary, our eldest burgess." "I thought so;" said Swift, "for he spoke as if his mouth were full of drugs." In these answers there is no trace of that odd, blunt way which, according to Pope, was often taken by the undiscerning for ill-humour: the senile decay he had feared and fought against for so many years had set in.

Thackeray's portrait of Swift in *Henry Esmond* and

the *English Humorists* is a caricature. Down to 1730 there is no evidence to justify its lurid tints. Yet one can understand how Thackeray came to draw it. Swift had set his heart on great place; and in spite of his protests was happiest in the company of those who held great place. At all times he could be imperious and contemptuous, especially to inferiors; and even though his harshness was often tempered by humour and a genuine desire to benefit his victim, it stung. These are weaknesses; but for the most part they were forgotten in the laughter of the moment and in admiration of his art. Thackeray, with his mind full of the stories told by Sheridan and Mrs. Pilkington of the last ten years of his life, allowed them to magnify and distort out of all proportion whatever seemed to him unpleasant in his earlier life.

4

Swift's two most intimate friends were women—Hester Johnson and Esther Vanhomrigh. In 1701, on his advice, Hester Johnson with her companion, Rebecca Dingley, crossed to Ireland; and thereafter their lives were as closely interknit as those of any of the famous friends of fable or history. He took charge of her affairs: almost at once he seems to have arranged to give her an allowance of £50 a year; and one of the first things he did on being appointed Dean of St. Patrick's, was to promise to add another £50 to it.

When Swift went to Laracor she usually accompanied him, and lodged with Dr. Raymond, Vicar of Trim. In Dublin she presided at the dinners given twice a week at the Deanery, and when Swift was suffering from illness she lived there to nurse him. Her friends had all at first been his, and they visited at the same houses. She accompanied him on several of his country jaunts:

she was with him, for instance, during the summer he spent at Sheridan's estate at Quilca, Co. Cavan. Yet in spite of their great intimacy and familiarity he took care never to be with her unless a third person was also present.

Our knowledge of their intercourse comes from the *Journal to Stella* and from the poems written by Swift to her on her birthdays between 1718 and her death in 1728.

Even the political entries in the *Journal* betray his affection for Stella; but it is when he writes about intimate things, rails at her exploits at the card-table, concerns himself about her eyes and health and speaks to her in the "little language," that we feel its depth and tenderness. There are no barriers of reserve between them. She has some special claim upon him. To her only of all the world are his mind and heart open. She comes to him in his dreams, and when he awakes he is all desolation. With her he could be happy though they two only were in the world, speaking baby language to one another, making silly rhymes. They know all about one another's ordinary wants and ailments: he likes the plainest ordinary meat at table—herrings, for instance—and she likes rarities—yes, she does, and he wishes she could have all he sees wherever he goes. He will put on an extra waistcoat against the cold on her advice. His caps are wearing out, and he does not know where to get others—he is as helpless as an elephant without her.

Sometimes he rises to a gayer, lighter tone, playing with trifles like a lover in the summer of his happiness, blowing a bit of gossamer in childish delight, but at the same time saying, "I love." "And so you say that Stella's a pretty girl; and so she be, and methinks I see her now as handsome as the day's long. Do you know what? When I am writing in our language I make up my

mouth just as if I was speaking it. I caught myself at it just now."[1] Should one not feel the deep undercurrent in these sentences one cannot mistake it in: "Farewell, my dearest lives and delights, I love you better than ever, if possible, as hope saved, I do, and ever will. God Almighty bless you ever, and make us happy together; I pray for this twice every day; and I hope God will hear my poor hearty prayers. Remember, if I am used ill and ungratefully, as I have formerly been, 'tis what I am prepared for, and shall not wonder at it. Yet, I am now envied, and thought in high favour, and have every day numbers of considerable men teasing me to solicit for them. And the ministry all use me perfectly well, and all that know them say they love me. Yet I can count upon nothing, nor will, but upon MD's love and kindness. They think me useful; they pretended they were afraid of none but me; and that they resolved to have me; they have often confessed this; yet all makes little impression on me. Pox of these speculations! they give me the spleen; and that is a disease I was not born to.—Let me alone, sirrahs, and be satisfied: I am, as long as MD and Presto are well:

Little wealth
And much health,
And a life by stealth;

that is all we want; and so farewell, dearest MD; Stella, Dingley, Presto, all together, now and for ever all together. Farewell again and again."[2]

Swift says that in her youth Stella had been extremely beautiful. "She was sickly from her childhood until about the age of fifteen; but then grew into perfect health, and was looked upon as one of the most beautiful, graceful and agreeable young women in London, only a little too fat. Her hair was blacker than the raven, and

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 134. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

every feature of her face in perfection."[1] This is borne out by the portraits of her. The best of them, the Bellinter portrait, once the property of her friend, Charles Ford of Wood Park, is thus described by Sir William Wilde in his *Closing Years of Swift*. "The hair is jet black, the eyes dark to match, the forehead fair, high and expansive, the nose rather prominent, and the features generally regular and well-marked. Notwithstanding that it has not been highly worked by the artist, there is a 'pale cast of thought' and an indescribable expression about this picture, which heighten the interest its historic recollections awaken. She is attired in a plain white dress, with a blue scarf; and around her bust hangs a blue ribbon to which a locket appears to be appended; and she wears attached to the lower part of her dress a white and red rose."[2]

Wilde thought this the portrait of a young girl, meaning by that a portrait of Stella in the prime of young womanhood. Sir Frederick Falkiner[3] thought it must have been made about 1717, when Stella was about thirty-six. It seems to me that Wilde was right. The face is youthful, and to judge from Swift's birthday verses to her, she lost her good looks early. In 1720 he describes her face as "an angel's face a little crack'd,"

> (Could poets or could painters fix
> How angels look at thirty-six);

a year or so later he says that half her locks are turned to grey and

> Time sits with his scythe to mow,
> Where erst sat Cupid with his bow.

It was the virtues of her mind—her breeding, humour,

[1] *On the Death of Mrs. Johnson*, vol. xi. p. 127.
[2] *Closing Years of Swift*, 1849.
[3] "Portraits of Stella," *Works*, vol. xii. p. 64.

wit and sense—that in her later years made even the "swains" and "fellows" crowd to her levees.

It is no wonder that she lost her good looks early, for she never enjoyed good health. Throughout the *Journal to Stella* Swift constantly and anxiously inquires about her eyes; in 1714 she fell into a serious indisposition; and from 1720 to 1728 she slowly languished away. It was in an effort to restore her to life and vigour that he took her to Quilca in 1725.

> You have fasted
> So long, till all your flesh is wasted:
> And must against the warmer days
> Be sent to Quilca down to graze.

All the eighteenth-century biographers praise in general terms the qualities of her mind. "She had elevated understanding," says Lord Orrery, "with all the delicacy and softness of her sex." "A woman, who would have done honour to the choice of the greatest prince on earth," says Delany. Swift, in the Birthday verses and in the account of her he wrote at her death, drew out her character in greater detail. Yet all he says leaves her a rather dim figure. She had courage: she once shot a burglar dead. She fostered none of the usual feminine affectations:

> She wonders where the charm appears
> In Florimel's affected fears;
> For Stella never learn'd the art
> At proper times to scream and start;
> Nor calls up all the house at night,
> And swears she saw a thing in white.
> Doll never flies to cut her lace,
> Or throw cold water in her face,
> Because she heard a sudden drum,
> Or found an earwig in her plum.[1]

She would not suffer flippant coxcombs and their idle

[1] "To Stella visiting me in My Sickness, 1720," *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 34.

chat and double-meanings, and at once made known her displeasure while other ladies laughed and flapped their fans. She had strong convictions, and did not conceal her indignation at those in high estate who were guilty of a moral fault. Against one who argued positively for a wrong opinion, she adopted Addison's plan and listened to him in ironical silence. She could confute the opinions of Hobbes and Epicurus and knew a good deal of history, and was a good critic of style both in verse and prose. Her one serious fault was a readiness to fly into a passion if any one censured or criticized her.

> Your spirits kindle to a flame
> Moved by the lightest touch of blame:
> And when a friend in kindness tries
> To show you where your error lies,
> Conviction does but more incense;
> Perverseness is your whole defense.[1]

Not an extremely attractive portrait nor a very living one! But one must remember that Swift wrote his account of her when sorrow had deprived him of half his powers. Yet it reminds us that Stella did not remain the young woman who is invested with so much radiance in the *Journal*. She was a real human being, and grew old, and the skies became grey over both her and Swift. Their love became the deep-seated affection between a man and a woman who have faced many storms together, and look to one another for strength as their lives near a close. One feels that in the last verses he wrote to her, in which he beseeches her to believe that virtue is no mere chimera of the mind and a future life no mere contrivance of the brain.

> Although we now can form no more
> Long schemes of life as heretofore;
> Yet you, while time is running fast,
> Can look with joy on what is past. . . .

[1] "To Stella, 1720," *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 30.

> . . . For Virtue in her daily race,
> Like Janus bears a double face;
> Looks back with joy where she has gone
> And therefore goes with courage on:
> She at your sickly couch will wait,
> And guide you to a better state.[1]

It is best to take this relationship as it is, to believe that Stella was neither Swift's mistress nor his secret wife, and not to construct for them a mysterious hidden life for which there is not a scrap of evidence. It is strange that they should have lived so close yet so far apart, but one cannot count on Swift behaving like other men; this union gave them both great happiness: the blackest cloud in Swift's life was that it would one day have to end. Why should not this strange and beautiful relationship be allowed to stand on its own rights? Why must we suppose that there was a mystery behind it because there would have been in the lives of an ordinary man and a less spirited woman?

It is necessary for me here, however, to mention some of the explanations of this relationship that have been given. It was said by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November 1757, that Swift could not marry Hester Johnson because both were illegitimate children of Sir W. Temple; but there is not a word in their letters that suggests fraternal kinship; and the dates of Temple's residence in Ireland make it impossible. Yet in spite of the evidence there have always been people ready to believe this, and they have developed a legend from the original story. Scott said that he had heard from a friend of the widow of Dr. Delany that immediately after the secret marriage Swift was in so gloomy a state of mind that Delany thought to confer with Archbishop King about him. As he entered the Archbishop's library, Swift

[1] "Stella's Birthday, March 13, 1726–7," *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 52.

rushed out with a countenance of distraction and passed him without speaking. He found the Archbishop in tears, and upon asking the reason, he said, "You have just seen the most unhappy man on earth." We are intended to infer that in the course of the marriage ceremony he had learned that Hester Johnson was his half-sister. But it is certain that she was not. Indeed, the dramatic tale is a further proof that she was not. If there had been any truth in the story of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Swift would have discovered it before 1716.

All the eighteenth-century biographers — Orrery, Delany, Deane Swift, Johnson, Sheridan—are agreed that the two were married a year or two after Swift's return to Ireland in 1714. Orrery and Sheridan give the date as 1716. George Monck Berkeley, on the authority of his uncle, Bishop Berkeley, who was at that time tutor to the son of Swift's old friend, the Bishop of Clogher, says that it took place in the Deanery garden.[1] Scott accepted this story, taking Deanery garden to mean Swift's garden in Dublin. Later authorities have insisted that it could mean only the Dean's garden at Clogher, because there is a tradition that it took place under a tree there.

Monck Mason, in *History of St. Patrick's Cathedral*, was the first to discredit the marriage. He pointed out that in legal documents after 1716, Hester Johnson signed her name as Hester Johnson, spinster, just as she had done before. The late Mr. Elrington Ball, the most learned of modern Swift scholars, insisted on the same fact, and while he did not say outright that there can have been no marriage, leaned in that direction; and definitely proved that it cannot have taken place in the Bishop of Clogher's garden, for neither he nor Swift were at Clogher in August or September of that year,

[1] *Literary Relics*, 1789.

the only two possible months.[1] A still stronger argument can be adduced against the marriage: if it took place it must have been irregular; it was not recorded in any church or state register, it was not made known to the world, and it did not carry with it the rights of husband and wife. It is difficult to imagine a Dean and Bishop of the Church going through such a mockery of the marriage ceremony. Of what advantage can it have been to any one? Or was Hester Johnson in an hysterical state, and had the mock, meaningless ceremony to be gone through to soothe her?

I am inclined to think that it never took place. The evidence of the eighteenth-century biographers is against that view. But they were evidently as much in the dark as we are; and when they said that a marriage had taken place, were really saying to the world that there was no illicit union between Hester Johnson and Swift, and trying to cover a friendship that had given rise to scandal with the cloak of marriage.

Assuming that there was no marriage, why was there none? The Earl of Orrery suggests one reason. "The flaw which in Dr. Swift's eyes reduced the value of such a jewel, was the servile state of her father, who, as has been said before, was a menial servant of Sir W. Temple." But this need not be considered. Sheridan comes nearer the mark when he says: "He knew not what the passion of love was; his fondness for Stella was only that of an affectionate parent for a favourite child." Delany dwells on Swift's fears that he would not be able to keep up an establishment. He had always intended to marry Hester Johnson: she was a woman fit to be the wife of a prince; but when he returned to Ireland in 1714, he was embittered and disappointed and tired of life, and

[1] S. Lane Poole held this view also. See his "Alleged Marriage of Swift and Stella," *Fortnightly Review*, Feb. 1910.

allowed their relationship to drift on in the old way, much to the chagrin of Stella and the sorrow of his friends. These reasons are sufficient in themselves to explain why he never married Stella; but there are others. One is that Swift was, as he tells us himself, of a "cold temper," not a man likely to be moved by the pleasures of the Garden of Armida. Another is that in 1714 he was involved in an *affaire* with another woman —Esther Vanhomrigh.

During Swift's stay in London between 1707 and 1709 he became acquainted with Mrs. Vanhomrigh, the handsome widow of a merchant of Dutch origin, who had been Commissary-General to Schomberg during the Revolution and had afterwards become Lord Mayor of Dublin. She had settled down in London and entertained at her house many fashionable people with Irish connections. On Swift's return to London in 1710, his friendship with the Vanhomrighs became very intimate. He often dined with them; when living in Chelsea he walked into the city in an old wig and gown and changed in their house; and they gave him a room in which he could read and write at pleasure.

For Esther, Mrs. Vanhomrigh's eldest daughter—who was, at their first meeting, twenty years of age though to appearance much younger—Swift had a special liking; he saw in her some of the qualities for which he admired Stella: a contempt for the usual feminine trivialities of the age, an interest in books and some reverence for himself. He describes her in "Cadenus and Vanessa" listening to the talk of a crowd of fashionable fops:

> With silent scorn Vanessa sat,
> Scarce listening to their idle chat
> Further than sometimes by a frown,
> When they grew pert, to pull them down.

At last she spitefully was bent
To try their wisdom's full extent,
And said, she valued nothing less
Than titles, figure, shape and dress,
That merit should be chiefly placed
In judgment, knowledge, wit and taste,
And these, she offered to dispute,
Alone distinguished man from brute. . . .

Through nature and through art she ranged,
And gracefully her subject changed:
In vain: her hearers had no share
In all she spoke, except to stare.
Their judgment was upon the whole:
"That lady is the dullest soul";
Then tapped their forehead in a jeer,
As who should say, "She wants it here;
She may be handsome, young and rich,
But none will burn her for a witch."

Lord Orrery says of Esther Vanhomrigh: "Vanessa was excessively vain. . . . She was fond of dress: impatient to be admired: very romantic in her turn of mind: superior in her own opinion to all her sex: full of pertness, gaiety and pride: not without some agreeable accomplishments, but far from being either beautiful or genteel: ambitious, at anyrate, to be esteemed a wit: and with that view always affecting to keep company with wits: a great reader and a violent admirer of poetry: happy in the thoughts of being reputed Swift's concubine: but still aiming and intending to be his wife. By nature haughty and disdainful, looking with the pity of contempt upon her inferiors and with the smiles of approbation upon her equals: but upon Swift with the eyes of love."[1]

Lord Orrery is determined to paint her as dark as he had painted her rival bright. But his unlovely picture is wholly of his own imagining. He had no acquaintance

[1] Orrery's *Remarks*, pp. 107–8.

with Swift and the friends who might have told him about her, till ten or twelve years after her death. It is only from "Cadenus and Vanessa" and the letters of Esther Vanhomrigh that one can truly learn now what kind of woman she was: the one reveals graces and affectations that might have taken a heart of adamant; and the other, an independence of mind and a sensibility to passion not ill-suited for her tragic part.

Swift and Vanessa became close friends. He encouraged her to read and study, called her Missessy and Misheskinage. She claimed a special right to his conversation. In a letter to Miss Anne Long, a toast of the Kit Cat Club, which he took care that Esther should read, Swift rallies her for "bidding her sister go downstairs because she had some special business with the Doctor."[1] And from the beginning it appears that there were secret understandings between them and secret meetings to which in later letters he several times refers with pleasure. "What would you give to have the history of Cad(enus) and (Vanessa), exactly written, through all its steps, from the beginning to this time? I believe it would do well in verse, and be as long as the other. I hope it will be done. It ought to be an exact chronicle of twelve years from (*December* 1707) the time of spilling of coffee, to drinking of coffee, from Dunstable to Dublin, with every single passage since. There would be the chapter of Madame going to Kensington; the chapter of the blister; the chapter of the Colonel going to France; the chapter of the wedding, with the adventures of the lost key; of the sham; of the joyful return; two hundred chapters of madness; the chapter of long walks; the Berkshire surprise; fifty chapters of little times; the chapter of Chelsea; the chapter of swallow and cluster; a hundred whole books of myself, etc.; the chapter of hide

[1] A. Martin Freeman, *Vanessa and Jonathan Swift*, 1921, p. 69.

and whisper; the chapter of who made it so; my sister's money."[1]

Two or three letters from Swift to Vanessa and from Vanessa to Swift, written about September 1712, have been preserved. In the latter a woman in love speaks—a woman claiming as a right all her lover's attention and amazed and angry that she should not receive it. She has written twice to Swift, who is at Windsor, and received no answer; she now writes a third time. "Had I a correspondent in China, I might have had an answer by this time. I never could think till now that London was so far off in your thoughts, and that twenty miles were by your computation equal to some thousands. I thought it a piece of charity to undeceive you in this point and to let you know, if you give yourself the trouble to write, I may probably receive your letter in a day. 'Twas that made me venture to take pen in hand the third time. Sure you'll not let it be to no purpose. You must needs be extremely happy where you are, to forget your absent friends."

"Cadenus and Vanessa"[2] is Swift's account of the beginning of their love.

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 62.

[2] The time of Vanessa's declaration must have been 1711 or the spring of 1712. It was in the summer of the latter year that Vanessa paid Swift the visit to Kensington referred to in the letter of chapters quoted above, and in the autumn that she pestered him with letters. Sheridan points out that the *Journal to Stella* is cold and stiff after March of this year and that the little language is sparingly used. The difficulty about accepting this date is that in 1712 Swift would hardly have thought of the name, Cadenus (Decanus). But the poem and the actual declaration are not the same thing.

The history of its composition may be as follows: In the spring of 1712, as the result of the freedom in speech and intercourse Swift allowed himself with her, and of her idolatrous admiration of his genius and gratified pride that he should give her so much atten-

Vanessa, not in years a score,
Dreams of a gown of forty-four,
Imaginary charms can find
In eyes with reading almost blind.
Cadenus now no more appears
Declined in health, advanced in years;
She fancies music in his tongue,
Nor farther looks but thinks him young. . . .

Now, said the nymph, to let you see
My actions with your rules agree,
That I can vulgar forms despise,
And have no secrets to disguise;
I knew, by what you said and writ,
How dangerous things were men of wit:
You caution'd me against their charms,
But never gave me equal arms;
Your lessons found the weakest part,
Aimed at the head, but reached the heart.

In 1720 he promised to write another poem of the same kind, which gave Vanessa infinite pleasure. "You make me happy beyond expression by your goodness. It would be too much once to hope for such a history."

Mrs. Vanhomrigh died in 1714, leaving her property, which was considerable, in confusion. Vanessa believed or affected to believe that she would be imprisoned for some of her mother's debts, and applied to Swift, who had at that time gone to Letcombe in Berkshire, for help and counsel. He lent her money, but that was not sufficient for her, and to his annoyance she sought him out in his country retreat. "I think, since I have known you," he wrote to her, "I have drawn an old house upon my head.

tion, Vanessa made it clear that she loved him. Swift, alarmed, tried to turn her aside by the kind of argument he uses in the poem; he may even have written some verses in this strain. His efforts were vain, and with much misgiving and hesitation he gave way to her. Later, in Ireland, the artist in him, probably encouraged by Vanessa herself, who saw in the poem a compliment to her beauty and wit, took up the incident again and fashioned it to the form in which it is known to us.

You should not have come by Wantage for a thousand pounds. You used to brag you were very discreet: where is it gone? It is probable I may not stay in Ireland long, but be back by the beginning of winter. When I am there, I will write to you as soon as I can conveniently, but it shall always be under a cover; and if you write to me, let some other direct it; and I beg you will write nothing that is particular, but what may be seen; for I apprehend letters may be opened, and inconveniences will happen. If you are in Ireland while I am there, I shall see you very seldom. It is not a place for any freedom, but where everything is known in a week, and magnified a hundred degrees. These are rigorous laws that must be passed through; but it is probable we may meet in London in winter, or, if not, leave all to fate, that seldom cares to humour our inclinations."[1]

Late in 1714 Esther Vanhomrigh and her younger sister, Mary (Molkin), crossed to Ireland against Swift's wishes, and took up residence in a house that had belonged to her father, Marley Abbey, near Celbridge, which is about twelve miles from Dublin. It is sequestered from the public eye by age-long trees. The Liffey runs through the grounds, now black, silent and deep, now brown and swirling beneath thick embowering foliage. About half a mile above the house a "lead" is taken off and along it meanders a shady alley. In this romantic place, which would have filled the soul of Werther with melancholy delight, Vanessa lived in desolation, grieving that her love was not returned so freely and fully as she wished it to be. Swift visited her with as much secrecy as possible: he was afraid of the "tattle of the nasty town." Tradition has it that he used to sit with Vanessa at a spot on the water's edge where a natural stone bench is shadowed by a huge overhanging rock.

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 233.

Swift was embarrassed by her presence; and she reproached him with deserting the principle he had taught her that virtue consists in acting rightly and not minding what people say. "You once had a maxim which was, to act what was right, and not mind what the world said: I wish you would keep to it now. Pray what can be wrong in seeing and advising an unhappy young woman? I cannot imagine. You cannot but know that your frowns make my life insupportable. You have taught me to distinguish and then you leave me miserable."[1] She threatened to commit suicide if he would not see her. She had a nobler soul than sit struggling with misfortunes.

Between 1714 and 1720 there are no letters, and this, taken with a passage in Deane Swift that after 1716 he tried to estrange her thoughts from him, has led to the belief that for some years they remained apart from one another. But when the letters do begin again in 1720 there is nothing in them to suggest a renewing of broken ties. For six years the current of their lives is lost to view; that is all; throughout them all Vanessa may by turns have threatened him and implored his pity and enjoyed secret hours of happiness. At any rate, this is how things went from 1720 till her death. She loved him with every atom of her being. All her thoughts were centred on him. When he wrote kindly to her or promised to come to see her, she became all happiness: when it seemed to her that he wrote not out of pity, but because all their past happinesses crowded into his mind, her delight had no bounds. In every letter she made many times the secret mark which signified to both endearment and affection. But often Swift could not come or delayed writing, and betrayed too much fear of what the town would say. Then she chided him—she must have been born chiding, said Swift—and pestered him with letters and

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 259.

threatened vengeance, and fell into a sullen moping state.

Vanessa's health steadily declined. Swift writes to her "to be as cheerful as she can, to read pleasant things that will make her laugh, and not sit moping with her elbows on her knees on a little stool by the fire." Vanessa answers in such sentences as these: "O! that I could hope to see you here, or that I could go to you. I was born with violent passions, which terminate all in one—that unexpressible passion I have for you. Consider the killing emotions which I feel from your neglect of me, and show some tenderness for me, or I shall lose my senses." She died in May 1723.

It is said that immediately before her death she and Swift violently quarrelled. Lord Orrery says that she wrote a "very tender epistle" to Swift, insisting on his immediate acceptance, or his absolute refusal, of her as his wife. "His reply was delivered by his own hand. He brought it with him when he made his final visit to Celbridge: and throwing down the letter upon her table, with great passion hastened back to his horse, carrying in his countenance the frowns of anger and indignation."

Deane Swift says that Vanessa wrote to Stella asking if she were married to Swift. She replied acknowledging the marriage, and then sent Vanessa's letter to Swift. This was the cause of the angry visit to Celbridge described by Orrery.

Yet there may have been no quarrel; and Swift in this matter as in so many others may have completely baffled the attempts of his own age and ours to penetrate his secrets. Esther Vanhomrigh did not, in her will drawn up in the month of her death, make Swift a trustee, or name him among the numerous friends who were each to

receive a sum of money to buy a ring. This is regarded as conclusive proof of the quarrel of which so many versions are given. It may just as easily be a trick to throw his friends and us off the scent.

One thing only is certain, that at this time the nearness of Swift to Vanessa was thrust upon his other love and caused her much pain; for in addition to the tattle of the town, "Cadenus and Vanessa"[1] was passed about in manuscript. A break between Swift and Stella was just averted. Delany gives this account of what happened: "I have good reason to believe that they both were greatly shocked and distressed (tho' it may be differently) upon this occasion. The Dean made a tour to the south of Ireland for about two months at this time, to dissipate his thoughts and give place to obloquy. And Stella retired (upon the earnest invitation of the owner) to the house of a cheerful, generous, good-natured friend of the Dean's, whom she also much loved and honoured. There my informant often saw her; and, I have reason to believe, used his utmost endeavour to relieve, support and amuse her in this sad situation."[2]

Swift was sincere when he said that in setting out to free Vanessa from the prejudices of the age and her sex, he did not dream he would awaken love in her breast. She was a lively intelligent girl, quick to receive instruction, and able to understand him when he said that virtue is not obedience to forms and ceremonies but acting according to reason. He was more than twice her age, the most original wit and genius of his time, the counsellor of ministers of state and the intimate friend of three or four great ladies who frequented her mother's house, at

[1] It was printed first about 1726. Vanessa did not, as is sometimes said, leave instructions in her will that the poem and her correspondence with Swift should be published.

[2] Delany, p. 57.

once their mentor and jester-in-chief. Why should he not spend an hour or two of merry conversation with her? Then she made it clear that she was in love with him, not with the admiration of a girl but the passionate love of a woman. He should have left her, for he knew very well marriage was impossible: he had another love who was still dearer to him. But the violence of her affection was too strong for him. He pitied her in the almost distracted state into which she had fallen, and his pity developed into something very like love. So began twelve years of intrigue and concealment. No doubt he hated his double life; but it gave him happiness too; for whatever he meant exactly when he spoke of "drinking their coffee" together, he did mean certainly secret hours of happiness and intimate conversation. What irony there is in this strange tragic story! He, who was so afraid of life and fenced himself about with rules lest life should betray him, carried into the great current of life! The moralist will say that here and here he might have stumbled out. But of what use is such counsel to a man whose body is tumbling over and over in a spate? Supposing that he had scrambled out and allowed the others or one of the others to go downstream, would we have thought more of him? In this tragic part of his life he behaved like a man of large and compassionate nature.

CHAPTER VIII

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

I

SWIFT seems to have written the bulk of *Gulliver's Travels* in 1719 and 1720, but down to the month of publication he continued to add and rewrite; and it may be that in the Voyage to Laputa were incorporated some early satirical fragments which had been written in 1714 for the purpose of giving fame to Martinus Scriblerus, the learned German who later wrote the notes and introduction to the *Dunciad*.

The form of Swift's book—a series of voyages—was due to the immense popularity of travels, real and imaginary, in the last years of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth. Lord Shaftesbury, in his "Advice to an Author" says (he is advising authors to keep their high-ranging fancy in check by reading the classics, and is condemning the modern taste for poems and plays about barbarous lands): "Yet so enchanted we are with the *travelling memoirs* of any casual Adventurer; that be his Character or Genius what it will, we have no sooner turned over a Page or two, than we begin to interest our selves highly in his Affairs. No sooner has he taken Shipping at the Mouth of the *Thames*, or sent his Baggages before him to *Gravesend*, or *Buoy in the Nore*, than strait our Attention is earnestly taken up. If in order to his more distant Travels, he takes some part of Europe in his way; we can with patience hear of Inns and Ordinarys, Passage-boats and Ferrys, foul and fair

Weather; with all the particulars of the Author's Diet, Habit of Body, his Personal Dangers and Mischances on land and sea. And thus, full of Desire and Hope we accompany him, till he enters on his great Scene of Action, and begins by the description of some *enormous Fish* or *Beast*. From monstrous *Brutes* he proceeds to yet more *Monstrous Men*. For in this race of Authors *he* is ever compleatest, and of the first Rank, who is able to speak of things the most *unnatural* and *monstrous*. . . . Monsters and Monster-Lands were never more in request; and we may often see a Philosopher or a Wit, run a Tale-gathering in these idle Desarts, as familiarly as the silliest woman or merest boy."[1]

That Swift was barbarous enough in his taste to pore over histories of Japan and America, of Incas and Iroquois "written by fryers and missionaries, pirates and renegades, sea-captains and trusty travellers," there is plenty of evidence. Among the books he read at Moor Park were Bernier's *History of the Kingdom of the Great Mogul* and Tachard's *Journey into Siam*. We know from his Letters that about 1720 he was reading many books of travel. He writes, for instance, to Vanessa in that year: "I am in much concern for poor Molkin (her sister who was ill), and the more, because I am sure you are so too. You ought to be as cheerful as you can for both your sakes, and read pleasant things that will make you laugh, and not sit moping with your elbows on your knees on a a little stool by the fire." And again: "We differ prodigiously in one point: I fly from the spleen to the world's end, you run out of your way to meet it. I doubt the bad weather has hindered you much from the diversions of your country house, and put you upon thinking in your chamber. The use I have made of it was to read I

[1] "Advice to an Author," Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*, 1737, vol. i. p. 346 and p. 350.

know not how many diverting books of history and travels."

Among the diverting books and voyages Swift read, were the *Voyages* of Captain William Dampier,[1] whose cousin Lemuel Gulliver of Redriff professes to be. He is an entrancing writer. What graphic pictures he draws of the wild elephants in the streets of Cachao, of the sufferings the Tonquinese endure to blacken their teeth, and of the Prince of Mindinao whom highest and lowest must approach creeping very low on their knees! Even when he is in the midst of a discussion of storms and tides and winds he is a mine of stories and picturesque information: how that in a hurricane a ship was cast ashore and heeled over so that her mast buried itself in the sand; how that Mr. John Smallbone made a ship that had broached to in a storm, "come to course" by going into the foreshrouds and spreading out the flaps of his coat. But of all this Swift borrows next to nothing. He does not carry us to Jamaica and Campeachy and Cochin China. Not these distant places but England and Ireland are the scene of *Gulliver's Travels*. Not human monsters, their skins spotted like a tiger's, nor flying fish as large as eagles and plumaged like peacocks, are his theme, but spaniels, monkeys, wasps, rats and sheep, such as could be seen any day in his own dear native land. The Brobdingnagian farmhouse; the farmer; his wife, who screamed at the sight of the [illegible]; good-natured little forty-foot Glumdalclitch; the squalling child that put everything into its mouth; the huge trencher in the middle of the table; the Sign of the Green Eagle; Lolbrurgrud, the Capital of Brobdingnag, the Pride of the Universe, are all English or Irish. Forget that the old ill-humoured fellow with his eyes shining through his spectacles like the full moon into a chamber at two windows, was as

[1] *New Voyage Round the World*, 1699. *Voyages and Descriptions*, 1700.

high as a steeple, and the incident might be one of the jottings from life strewn up and down the *Journal to Stella*. Even Houyhnhnm Land is England, and the Houyhnhnms are English or Irish horses that have acquired sone circus tricks—sitting about on their hindquarters and at need sewing with a needle held between the hoof and the pastern. Any day in the Spring or Summer, walking in a sheltered country district and seeing them stand or lie in easy attitudes, and noting their mild and benevolent looks, one might imagine them to be masters. And often they come at a soft pace along a fence behind the intruder as if to ask the reason for his presence.

Besides Dampier's *Voyages* Swift drew for his *Travels* from a series of Imaginary Voyages, most of them rightly called diverting books: Cyrano de Bergerac's *Other World*, Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre Australe Connue*, Denis Verrais D'Alais's *Histoire des Severambes*, Lucian's *True History*, Rabelais's *Voyage of Pantagruel to the Court of Queen Whim*. He wrote *Gulliver* when fresh from the reading of those works; he has taken up many of their points of satire and used them for his own end; and he has incorporated many of their fanciful and humorous incidents with those of his own invention. The discussions as to whether Gulliver is a *lusus naturæ*, as to whether it is shameful to be sucked, as to whether one should show extreme sorrow over the death of a husband or wife, as to whether a life that has to be sustained by all kinds of mixed drugs is worth living, can all be paralleled from one or another of those writers. Gulliver performs at the Green Eagle just as Cyrano had done before him for the amusement of the Lunarians; he is tied to the ground with strings by the Lilliputians just as Hercules was in the *Imagines* of Philostratus by pygmies; he converses with Homer and the other great ancients in Glubbdubdrib just as Lucian

had done in the Fortunate Isles; and in the Academy of Projectors he sees an artist sowing the land with chaff, who reminds one of the artist at the court of Queen Whim ploughing the sand with two foxes.

(There is much in *Gulliver's Travels* that was suggested to Swift by the imaginary voyages. Yet it is not this that strikes one. It is rather that being an imaginary voyage it should be so new and original.)

Take the incidents. I find on a careful computation that there are twenty-two in "A Voyage to Lilliput." Of these even the most zealous source-hunter cannot maintain that more than one is directly borrowed from an imaginary voyage—Gulliver being tied down as Hercules was in the *Imagines* of Philostratus. Nine are suggested by political events at which Swift meant to glance. Nevertheless it brings out the nature of *Gulliver's Travels* to place it beside one or two of these Voyages, the kind of books he had in his mind when he began to write.

One diverting book that Swift certainly had read was *The Other World* of Cyrano de Bergerac, his *States and Empires of the Moon*, and his *States and Empires of the Sun*—a book printed in Paris in 1657.

Romance has thrown her spell over Cyrano, but the man himself had spell enough about him as he ruffled across the Pont Neuf—swordsman, dancer, theologian, heretic, scientist; carrying his nose, huge as an American Indian's or the beak of a great parrot, like a perpetual challenge. He found, or his hero found, various people in the sun and in the moon known to human history: Enoch; the demon of Socrates; a parrot he had released from its cage on the earth, saying it had reason; one of Noah's troublesome women-folk who, when in the days of the flood the waters rose as high as the moon, rowed over to it in the ark's skiff; and the little Spaniard, Gonsalez, whose flock of geese being trained to fly at a white

mark on a mountain, had one evening mistaken the moon for it and carried their master thither. The proper inhabitants of the moon, however, are splendid four-footed creatures, swift and strong as tigers but with human faces. They have two languages, music and a gesture language, at the latter of which they become so expert that they may be said to be not men who speak but bodies that quiver. Their money is poems—rondeaux, ballades, verses of any kind, provided they have passed the mint. A sonnet will keep you fourteen days in a good lunary hotel. Their town and country houses are the same, for great windmills carry them from one place to another, and in winter they can be lowered by levers into deep cellars where the wind and the snow cannot reach them, and they can lie snug till the March nor'-easters are past. An agreeable odour from the kitchen provides one with a hearty dinner in the moon, and for dessert one can shoot down a lark or two ready roasted. In the sun the inhabitants are either little dwarfs who live on pomegranates that grow on trees of gold and silver, or they are birds: all the birds that have lived and died in the world come in the end to this country.

Cyrano's story is a thing of exuberant fancy, though there runs through it a strand of amusing speculation about religion and the life of man and a strand of satire.

Gulliver is very different. Cyrano protests in his first chapter that he is going to tell a true story, then kicks reality away from him and flies into the marvellous. The grave, good-natured Gulliver speaks with an air of conviction from his account of his education at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, till on his return from Houyhnhnm Land, he makes a habit of looking at himself in the glass in order to accustom himself to the sight of a human creature. Even now, while his bald seaman's narrative lies open before us, though it be for the hundredth time,

we read it as a tale of real adventure. It imposes on us a sense of actuality. When Gulliver is drawn up from his chest into the ship of the honest worthy Shropshireman, Mr. Thomas Wilcocks, we realize with a shock that we are again among men of ordinary stature. We are not surprised when the Portuguese sailors fall alaughing at Gulliver's strange tone of speech, which seemed to them like the neighing of a horse.

How does he manage to give this impression of reality? Gulliver goes into the witness-box and swears to the size of a Lilliputian soldier's half-pike and to the size of a bristle from the King of Brobdingnag's beard.

As has often been pointed out, Gulliver is twelve times greater than a Lilliputian and twelve times smaller than a Brobdingnagian; and all his needs in food, clothes and housing, and all the estimates of his strength, whether to help or to injure, are worked out on that scale. One or two errors have been pointed out. Could Gulliver have drawn the Blefuscan fleet from its anchorage—fifty large-ish rowing-boats? One doubts whether a troop of cavalry, twenty-four six-inchers on war-chargers, could exercise on a handkerchief, even on a large sailor's handkerchief two and a half foot square. The houses in the capital of Lilliput, which was five hundred foot square, must have been skyscrapers to hold 500 000 Lilliputians. Gulliver in Brobdingnag travels on horseback in easy stages of about 160 miles a day. Swift would have benefited here by some knowledge of the despised sciences of Sir Isaac Newton. Does a horse twelve times larger than an ordinary horse travel twelve times faster? Would a Brobdingnagian horse be a Flying Scot?

Then by his asides and amused observations he soon gets us to accept the size of the Lilliputians and of the

Brobdingnagians as the most natural things in the world. They seem to be those of a real traveller: his comparison of the dresses of the Queen of Lilliput and her ladies, when seen from a height of six feet, to a rich petticoat embroidered with gold and silver; his wonder at the young girl threading a needle with invisible silk; his fear at the royal dining-table of Brobdingnag when he hears twelve huge scythes and twelve huge pitchforks clattering and grinding. He speaks of Gulliver's feats and of his everyday life at Redriff, Rotherhithe, as if they were on the same level of fact; describes the capture of the Blefuscan fleet and the escape from drowning in a bowl of cream in the same tone as the upbringing of his towardly son, Johnny, and his progress at the grammar school.

Gulliver's Travels differs from all other diverting books in that Swift, with his grave mask, gives an impression that he is describing a real voyage. It differs from them also in the nature of its satire. Cyrano de Bergerac ranged through the past and present, heaven and earth, to find ideas, religious, scientific and literary, on which to try his wit. Mediæval legend, classical romance, Gassendi, Descartes, jostle in his pages. He kept open house for ideas and drank the health of every guest; he was a libertine in thought. Swift is a moralist beside him, no heretic, no wanton lover of the strange and new. In a sense *Gulliver's Travels* is the best sermon the Dean of St Patrick's ever preached—a sermon chiefly devoted to the corruption of man as a social and political being—the sermon, too, of a somewhat old-fashioned and whimsical clergyman, who, seeing no good in the new-fangled sciences of his time, concludes that their absurdities are signs of decadence. It might be added, however, that it is only half a Christian sermon: there is no salvation in it, unless there be salvation in humour.

2

It has always been known that *Gulliver's Travels*, besides being a diverting tale, is a satire on social and political life; and all Swift's critics and biographers, from Lord Orrery to the present day, have tried to find its "particular applications." On occasion they have set themselves as hopeless a task as those projectors of Lagado who tried to extract wool from granite. When Gulliver fires his pistol and astonishes the Lilliputians, and when he threatens to put a Lilliputian into his mouth, there is no secret. Nor is there any in Gulliver's escape from drowning in a bowl of cream, nor in his encounters with the frog and the monkey, the wasps and the rats. In many of the incidents, certainly, there is an inner meaning. Swift, indeed, has often hidden not only one meaning, but two or three, beneath his seemingly straightforward narrative. The usual interpretation of the hostilities between Lilliput and Blefuscu, is that they refer to Bolingbroke's part in finishing the War of the Spanish Succession. When Gulliver swims away with the Blefuscan fleet, he is Bolingbroke, who claimed to have destroyed French naval power by insisting on the demolition of Dunkirk in the Treaty of Utrecht. When he refuses to help in annihilating Blefuscu, he is Bolingbroke advocating that free trade with France should be part of the treaty. But Mr. Shane Leslie in his recent work on Swift (*The Skull of Swift*) gives his refusal another interpretation. He thinks it to be a side-glance at Marlborough, who was credited with the desire to do what Gulliver refused to do—reduce a whole Empire and bring a free and brave people into slavery. It would be difficult to prove either wrong.

In Skyresh Bolgolam, the High Admiral of Lilliput, who proposed to kill Gulliver by strewing his shirt with poisonous juices, Swift, it has been maintained, attacked

his old enemy, the Earl of Nottingham, the Dismal and Not-in-Game, whom he had attacked in several poems for deserting the Tory party and voting with the Whigs against peace with Spain in December 1711.[1] But may it not refer to Sir Paul Methuen, who opposed the Bill brought in by Walpole and seconded by Lord Finch, son of the Earl of Nottingham, in 1725, for restoring to Bolingbroke his family inheritance, on the ground that Bolingbroke's public crimes "were so heinous, so flagrant, and of so deep a dye, as not to admit of any expiation or atonement"?[2] Taylor, in a note to his edition of *Gulliver's Travels*,[3] says that the Duke of Argyll, who in his rage at Swift's *Public Spirit of the Whigs* had demanded that £300 should be given for the discovery of its author, is Skyresh Bolgolam.

The particular political satire is easiest to discover in "A Voyage to Lilliput," which, when not merely a diverting tale, is an allegory of the political disputes in Swift's age. The quarrel between the Big-Endians and the Small-Endians is that between Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Tramecksan or High-heels are the Tories and the Slamecksan or Low-heels are the Whigs; when his Imperial Highness, the Heir to the Crown, begins to hobble with one heel a little higher than another, the reported intention of the Prince of Wales (George II. in 1727) to transfer his favour from the Whigs to the Tories, is meant. Blefuscu is France, and Gulliver is sometimes Bolingbroke, as has been pointed out. The articles of Impeachment against Quinbus Flestrin are a satire on those drawn up against Harley, Bolingbroke and Ormond for high treason in 1715. But Gulliver is sometimes Swift himself: when he disgusts the Empress by extin-

[1] C. H. Firth, *The Political Significance of Gulliver's Travels*, p. 10.
[2] Cox, *Walpole*, vol. i. p. 207.
[3] Published in 1840.

guishing the fire in the palace, he is thinking of *A Tale of a Tub*; and in the four score and three chains and thirty-four padlocks with which he was secured, has been discovered an allusion to the number of pamphlets Swift had written. Flimnap, the Treasurer, is Sir Robert Walpole, and the green, red and blue ribands, to win which he showed so much agility, are the Orders of the Thistle, the Bath and the Garter. Walpole had revived the Order of the Bath in 1725, and in 1726 he was the first commoner to receive the Order of the Garter.

It is remarkable that in the earlier editions of *Gulliver's Travels* and in the early lives of Swift and even in the newspapers of the time there is very little mention of the particular political allegory. Gay and Pope even wrote that the politicians to a man were agreed that it was free from particular political reflections—a strange sentence, when one remembers obvious satirical hits like Flimnap's being saved from injury by falling on the King's cushion, that is, the King's all-powerful mistress, the Duchess of Kendal. But it is not surprising; for except for one or two incidents like this—and even this is uncertain, for the Duchess of Kendal had, for a consideration of £10,000 or so, been a convenient cushion many times—and the reference to Walpole's revival of the Order of the Bath, it deals with old history. Skyresh Bolgolam may be the Earl of Nottingham, but by 1726 the reason for Swift's hatred of him—his union with the Whigs against peace with Spain—must have been forgotten by the great number of Swift's readers—not, of course, by Swift.

Besides, Swift does not give recognizable portraits of the people he refers to as Dryden does in *Absalom and Achitophel*. Gulliver stands for Bolingbroke throughout a large part of "A Voyage to Lilliput"; but there is no real resemblance between the plain ingenuous sailor and the brilliant schemer. Swift's method is to mention some like-

ness between the character in the book and the statesman he wishes to attack (Flimnap contesting for the ribands reminds us of Walpole); and then to draw a grotesque figure which he hopes by his skill in the art of political lying to make us accept as the original.

It has been suggested that Reldresal, principal Secretary of State in Lilliput, is the Earl of Carteret, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland from 1724 to 1730, who was on friendly terms with Swift, but in October 1724 offered a reward of £300 for the discovery of the author of the *Drapier's Letter* to the people of Ireland.[1] Reldresal first appears in the Voyage giving Gulliver an account of the Tramecksan and Slamecksan, the High-Heels and Low-Heels; and asking for his help against the Blefuscans. Later, at the council table where Skyresh Bolgolam proposed that Gulliver's shirt should be strewn with poisonous juices, Reldresal played the part of a "true friend" and pleaded that his eyes should be put out instead and that then he should be starved to death. Perhaps this ironical portrait was meant for Carteret, but it is not a *character* of him.

Swift did not write "A Voyage to Lilliput" with the hope of affecting the course of public affairs. Some of the satire in it refers to ancient enmities; much of it is so obscure that only in our time has its full implications been realized. Once or twice he gave a touch of his whip to Walpole: in his references to Skyresh Bolgolam and Reldresal he perhaps satisfied long-entertained desires for vengeance. But his chief aim was to write a contemptuous and at the same time diverting account of English political life, such an account as would in his view be generally true and generally unintelligible, though based on his particular knowledge. With this aim he hunted through his odds and ends of memory and fitted them

[1] C. H. Firth, p. 10.

together to make an imaginative whole, now thinking of Gulliver as himself, now thinking of him as Bolingbroke, taking hints for his Bolgolams and Reldresals from several politicians he had known. The result is a diverting tale which, read as history, is a tangle of contradictions and obscurities, but which read as an imaginative satire, has always been an open book.[1]

The satire in a "Voyage to Brobdingnag" is even more general than that in "A Voyage to Laputa." It rests chiefly in Gulliver's ironical praise of England and the King's biting replies. Gulliver summons up all his oratorical powers to exalt his country: her standing armies, her lawyers and judges, her sects and parties, the brilliance of her politicians, the vastness of her wealth, the glory she has won in war, the excellence of her system of government. The King cannot refrain from smiling at the self-confidence of the puny orator; but he is horrified at the picture of corruption little Grildrig unwittingly describes. On what principle were new Lords created for the House of Peers? he asked. Was bribery never used to induce the vulgar to sell their votes for the House of Commons? How did it come about that the amount of money issued by the Treasury each year was double that received from taxes? Of what use was a mercenary army in the midst of peace and among a free people? And he concluded with the famous sentence: "I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

He connects with this general political satire one of his favourite ideas that there is no profound science in politics, no *arcana*; that all that is wanted in a governor is fair intelligence, honesty and the capacity to carry through the common forms of business. He formed this

[1] These ideas were suggested by Professor Firth's pamphlet.

idea while reflecting on the bungle Bolingbroke and Oxford had made of their Government—Bolingbroke by his brilliance and ambition, Oxford by his shuffling opportunism. A blunt piece of ivory, he says, in a pamphlet written at the time, directed by a little strength and a steady hand will divide a sheet of paper better than a sharp penknife. An infusion of the alderman is necessary to those employed in public affairs. Plain good sense and a firm adherence to the point have proved more effectual than all those arts which he remembers a great man used to call the spirit of negotiating. His veneration for what are called *arcana imperii* and events imputed to the profound skill and address of a minister, has much abated; the fewer there are in any administration the better; for they are in reality the mere effects of negligence, weakness, humour, passion or pride, or the natural course of things left to themselves. "I look upon it," he says, "that God intending the government of a nation in the several branches and subordinations of power, hath made the science of governing sufficiently obvious to common capacities; otherwise the world would be left in a desolate condition, if great affairs did always require a great genius, whereof the most fruitful age will hardly produce three or four in a nation, among which princes, who of all other mortals are the worst educated, have twenty millions to one against them that they shall not be of the number; and proportionable odds for the same reasons are against every one of noble birth and great estates."[1]

The idea to which I refer is woven into the political discussion of the "Voyage to Lilliput" and of the "Voyage to Brobdingnag." The King of Brobdingnag rejects with indignation Gulliver's suggestion that he should teach

[1] "An Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry," *Works*, vol. v. p. 434. See also *Correspondence*, *passim*.

him how to make gunpowder; and Gulliver sets down his refusal to his having no knowledge of politics as a science. "For I remember very well, in a discourse one day with the King, when I happened to say there were several thousand books among us written upon the art of government, it gave him (directly contrary to my intention) a very mean opinion of our understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all mystery, refinement and intrigue, either in a prince or a minister. He could not tell what I meant by secrets of state, where an enemy or some rival nation were not in the case. He confined the knowledge of governing within very narrow bounds: to common sense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal causes; with some other obvious topics which are not worth considering. And he gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

3

The satire in the "Voyage to Laputa," the Flying Island, is to appearance merely a pleasant and picturesque jest at the affectations and eccentricities with which scholars have been credited in all times—holding their heads to one side, standing in twisted attitudes, becoming so absorbed in their problems that they have to be recalled to the ordinary affairs of life by an attendant—all those oddities of the scholar which can be seen any day in an Oxford or Cambridge college. Their particular manias are mathematics and music. Their dress is adorned with figures from Euclid and designs of musical instruments; their mutton is served up in the shape of an

equilateral triangle, their bread as cones and parallelograms, and their ducks are trussed as fiddles. When they make a noise on their instruments, as they often do for three hours together, they think they are keeping tune with the music of the spheres. But this apparently light fanciful jest has a sting. It is an indictment of English rule of Ireland. These mathematicians can do nothing well. Their houses are ill-built, with not a right angle in them. They are the prey of the foolish fear that the earth will be absorbed in the sun or destroyed by a brush from the tail of a comet. Their wives deceive them before their eyes. They cannot govern successfully Balnibarbi, the land beneath the island. They would like to dominate it absolutely, and they sail above it in their boat of adamant, shutting out rain and sunshine from those parts of it which are contumacious. But the people of Lagado, the capital of Balnibarbi, when they in their turn were threatened, refused meekly to submit and broke the tyranny of their lords; they built four high towers and concealed a magnet in each, which, on the island approaching too near, almost dragged it to destruction; and they prepared a huge bonfire with which to crack the adamantine sheath of the island.

Here the rulers of England are identified with Sir Isaac Newton—that mean man living in a back street, as he is called elsewhere—who had certified to the excellence of the coins Wood, the hardwareman, had tried to foist on Ireland; their principles of government are ridiculed by the suggestion that they are as impractical as those he and his fellow-members of the Royal Society acted upon in mathematics and astronomy. The bonfire and the high towers are Swift's Irish pamphlets.

The "Voyage to Laputa" at the time of its publication was counted the least brilliant of all the *Travels*. That

may partly have been due to the darkness of the allegory (none of the innumerable critics of *Gulliver* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries penetrated it—probably because their political allegiance would not allow them to admit that Ireland ever had been ill-treated); and partly it was due to the feeling that the satire on Newton and the Fellows of the Royal Society was wide of the mark. Scientists have no claim to immunity from ridicule, but when the ridicule springs from prejudice and ignorance, however witty and scathing it be, they may walk unconcerned.

The Royal Society, from its foundation in 1663, was a target for satire. Samuel Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, never lost an opportunity of scoffing at it; as in that poem where a mouse gets into the telescope and is taken by the Fellows for an elephant. Butler had some reason for this attitude; for a few of the early experiments recorded in Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* are extremely absurd. For instance:

> Of destroying the shining of fish by vitriol.
> Of feeding a carp in the air.
> Of spiders not being enchanted by a circle of unicorn's horn or Irish earth laid about them.[1]

There was much less reason for this attitude in later years, and more especially after Newton had communicated his great discoveries to the Society. But the fusilade of satire never stopped. The natural scientist with his fossils and worms, the doctor with his microscopical examinations, were laughed at again and again as busy over trifles of no value. William King, the wit, ends his dialogue, "The Transactioneer," written in 1700, in this fashion:

[1] *History of the Royal Society*, 1667, p. 223.

Transactioneer. But, pray, let me ask your opinion of these "Philosophical Transactions," and what thoughts you have of my Friends. Are they not men that take a great deal of pains to improve knowledge, and let nothing pass that is worth noting?

Gentleman. Much pains, it must be allowed, ye have taken: it is a pity ye had not considered to what purpose.

Transactioneer. Why, is there not a great deal of natural knowledge to be learned from what I have written and published?

Gentleman. Sir, one may learn how prettily you and your Correspondents are employed; but nothing that will make a man wiser, or more a Philosopher: for what am I the wiser for knowing "the mice creep into holes," or "how nastily the Moors pull their meat"? Nor is what you have acquainted me with of the generation of Fleas any more than what a louzy beggar could have told many years ago.

Transactioneer. And is that all you can see in such improvements?

Gentleman. No, sir, it is not all: for your Correspondent tells us that Coffee promotes the Tobacco trade, and consumes Pipes and Candles. But, I suppose, any Coffee-woman knows that, without the assistance of your friend to inform her.[1]

By 1726 this kind of ridicule was rather old-fashioned. The Royal Society had established itself. The greatness of its work was recognized all over Europe. Readers of *Gulliver* perhaps felt that if they laughed too loud at the

[1] In "The Transactioneer," Dialogue 1, one of the facts ridiculed is that the inhabitants of St. Kilda are not infected with a cough unless at the time of the chamberlain's annual visit. King's *Works*, 1776, vol. ii. p. 34.

new mathematics and the new astronomy, they would convict themselves of folly.

The satire in the account of Balnibarbi is directed against Projectors in the usual sense of that word in the early eighteenth century—founders of new and daring enterprises. De Foe, in his *Essay on Projects*, distinguishes between the "mere" projector and the honest projector. The "mere" projector embarks on a wild scheme promising untold profit; with the help of stock-jobbers gathers in thousands of pounds for its promotion, and then disappears. The honest projector, on the other hand, puts a new weaving machine on the market or proposes a system of banks which will facilitate the circulation of money, or designs a university for women. Swift slumps all projectors together. They build houses from the top downwards; run water uphill in order to get greater power from it in its fall; plough and manure a field at the same time by turning six hundred hogs into it. But, as things have turned out, no one of these projects was so nonsensical after all. Sky-scrapers may be said to be built from the top downwards; it is often profitable to make an artificial waterfall; and six hundred hogs in a field that has some roots in it do no harm to its fertility. Swift is not to be trusted when he turns to science, agriculture and business.

4

Gulliver's Travels is not merely a satire on a few pedants or on two or three detested politicians, but a satire on all the activities of man—his pride in his body, mind, country and the past of his race; on his laws, education, standing armies, colonies, trade; on every boasted institution of European life. It culminates in the famous sentence in the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" where it is suggested

that the reason that distinguishes man from the brutes may be a kind of false mirror that reflects only a distorted image of what is presented to it. After Gulliver had described to his Houyhnhnm master the effects of modern warfare, the Houyhnhnm said, "That although he hated the Yahoos of this country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious qualities than he did a gnnayh (a bird of prey) for its cruelty, or a sharp stone for cutting his hoof. But when a creature pretending to reason could be capable of such enormities, he dreaded lest the corruption of that faculty should be worse than brutality itself. He seemed, therefore, confident that instead of reason, we were only possessed of some quality fitted to increase our natural vices; as the reflection from a troubled stream returns the image of an ill-shapen body, not only larger, but more distorted."

As the book progresses the satire becomes more direct. The tone of the first voyage is jesting. Let the Lilliputians with their intrigues and impeachments, their high heels and their low heels and their eggs, live out their little lives in their patchwork fields. In the "Voyage to Brobdingnag" he laughs heartily at the contemptible pretensions of men; though in the interests of truth and kindness he cannot but say they are odious little vermin. In the third Voyage is his terrible picture of the past—of the Pimps, Parasites and Buffoons who have made History; and his dark and still more terrible picture of the horror of old age. In "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" he represents natural men as below the beasts, and civilized men as fiends.

A "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" is a curse hurled at humanity, a repetition at length of the curse that often occurs in his Letters—Drown the World! It is sometimes assumed that in it Swift's ideal world is contrasted with the world created by men, that it is his Utopia or

Erewhon. But Swift suggests nothing of the kind. When Gulliver finds his chief happiness in conversing with his two stone horses and his groom, when he stops his nose with rue, lavender or tobacco leaves so that his wife and children may not be offensive to him, he becomes a subject of jest. When the Portuguese Captain, Pedro de Mendez, gives Gulliver two of his shirts and lends him £20 for his voyage home, and treats him with such astonishing civility, we do not for a moment imagine him to be inferior to the four-footed creatures who are so expert with the hollow part between the pastern and hoof of the forefoot and who celebrate birthdays, holidays and funerals with so much equanimity. Nor is "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" primarily a satire on European institutions like war, the legal profession, the science of medicine. Every page holds some angry, bitter reflection on them; but it was not his chief intention to make an attack on particular evils. In 1732 Swift wrote a poem entitled "To a Lady Who Desired the Author to Write Some Verses upon Her in the Heroic Style":

> Thus, I find it by experiment,
> Scolding moves you less than merriment.
> I may storm and rage in vain;
> It but stupefies your brain.
> But with raillery to nettle,
> Sets your thoughts upon their mettle;
> Gives imagination scope;
> Never lets your mind elope;
> Drives out brangling and contention,
> Brings in reason and invention.
> For your sake as well as mine,
> I the lofty style decline.
> I should make a figure scurvy,
> And your head turn topsy-turvy.
>
> I who love to have a fling
> Both at senate-house and king;
> That they might some better way tread,
> To avoid the pubilc hatred;

Thought no method more commodious,
Than to show their vices odious;
Which I chose to make appear,
Not by anger, but by sneer.
As my method of reforming,
Is by laughing, not by storming,
(For my friends have always thought
Tenderness my greatest fault),
Would you have me change my style?
On your faults no longer smile;
But, to patch up all our quarrels,
Quote you texts from Plutarch's Morals,
Or from Solomon produce
Maxims teaching Wisdom's use? [1]

These verses are very true of the first two Voyages and of a great part of the third; and there are passages in "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" of which it might be claimed that they are true also: for instance, that about the lawyers who do not ask what claim he has to the cow, but whether "the said cow were red or black; her horns long or short; whether the field I graze her in be round or square; whether she was milked at home or abroad." But as a whole "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" is a work conceived in fierce anger. It does not drive out

Brangling and contention,
Bring in reason and invention.

It is an explosion of the *saeva indignatio* he nursed in his mind. In the other Voyages he remains master of himself: here he is writhen by a passion. He proceeds indeed by way of a sneer, but a sneer that withers. The howl of the young Yahoo in love, the quarrel for the coloured stones, the servilities of the favourite and the punishment meted out to him—with all the nastiness he can imagine, he bemires humanity. The comparison of these swinish beings to the Yahoos of Europe to the

[1] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 225.

infinite disadvantage of the latter, is the climax of his rage.

There is no reason in "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." His Yahoos have no resemblance to men; his horses that shake paws with one another and travel about in litters and thread needles, have escaped from a menagerie. He imagined both and brought them into comparison, so that he might, as it were, strike humanity across the face with a clout.

Swift was not the first satirist to say that lawyers made precedents of all their wrong judgements and called them justice; that wars were fought for differences of opinion in things indifferent: nor the first to satirize doctors for their prognostics and ministers of state for their promises. Gulliver told his Houyhnhnm master that "this whole Globe of Earth must be at least three Times gone round before one of our better Female Yahoos could get her Breakfast, or a Cup to put it in." In order to feed the Luxury and Intemperance of the Males and the Vanity of the Females, he went on, they sent away the greatest Part of their necessary things to other countries, from whence, in return, they brought the materials of diseases, folly and vice, to spend among themselves. Hence it followed of necessity that vast numbers of their People were compelled to seek their Livelihood by Begging, Robbing, Stealing, Cheating, Pimping, Forswearing, Flattering, Suborning, Forging, Gaming, Lying, Fawning, Hectoring, Voting, Scribbling, Stargazing, Poisoning, Whoring, Canting, Libelling, Freethinking, and the like occupations.

A few years before *Gulliver* there had appeared in England a book that gave a view of society very like this—Bernard de Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. Mandeville says that modern society could not exist had not the individuals who compose it many vices. The wealthy

brewer who endows charitable institutions and patronizes the arts, depends for his wealth on the knave who sells his liquor to highwaymen and their drabs in the slum suburbs. There would be no resplendent Lord Mayors and no sleek clergymen arrayed in silks and fine linen were there not a large, uneducated, toiling population. Mandeville did not think this state of society admirable. He did not rejoice to see the tares among the wheat, nor advise that they should be cultivated for the further glory of civilization. But he could not shut his eyes to the fact that, as things were, they could not be eradicated without completely destroying the modern structure of life. He maintained that that glory which is the aim of the modern state is incompatible with virtue.

One but requires to put Mandeville beside Swift to realize how different they are. Mandeville makes a diagnosis of the sickness of society, writes a prescription and goes home to bed. Swift is lacerated to the heart. He is consumed by an indignation that makes candescent even the mind of the simple, honest, good-natured Gulliver. He abandons all decency and hurls vile taunts at the patient he had come to cure.

It may be allowed that he had some reason for running amuck as he did. He was not one of those easy-hearted gentlemen who can dance and sing with a quiet conscience the night his best friend dies. It is often the spleen that rages in his satire. He was not an even-tempered man, out to make the punishment fit the crime. He struck as nastily and cruelly as he could. His anger at the follies and hypocrisies of mankind was exacerbated by the sense that he had been unjustly treated, and that by trifling incompetence and vanity his party had lost its opportunity. But when one looks out on the world, on its jealousies, servility, its ridiculous class pride, its indifference to want; on the pompous fashion with which

man plumes himself on his efforts; on the moral cancer that develops in ourselves and in those we admire most; and when one regards the progress of civilization that leaves millions in squalor, and the long course of wars, revolutions and famines by which it has attained this glorious culmination, one must allow that the volcanic outburst of Swift's rage was not simply mental weakness. Many men who are dimly aware of the evils humanity brings on itself, drug themselves into obliviousness of them; and others by plying full steam down the stream of life try to forget the drowning cries and the poor wretches on the foundering barque. These things were blazed on Swift's eyeballs.

CHAPTER IX

POEMS

SWIFT began his literary career with a poem, the "Ode to the Athenian Society" (1691); and in another pindaric ode of the same time he speaks of his desire to write poetry as an unquenchable fire.

> In vain to quench this foolish fire I try
> In wisdom and philosophy.

Nature, he says, has bound some men to the plough, others to trade, others to learning, but she has tied him to the Muses' galley.

> In vain I tug and pull the oar:
> And when I almost reach the shore,
> Straight the Muse turns the helm and I launch out again;
> And yet, to feed my pride,
> Whene'er I mourn, stops my complaining breath,
> With promise of a mad reversion after death.

But the "mad reversion" was to be different from what he was thinking of here. He was to give his allegiance to a Muse not known to the Ancient Nine, the Muse that dictated *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub*. His poems were the by-play of his genius, occasional pieces struck off in moments of high spirits to amuse the household where he was staying, or scribbled between dinner and bedtime by the deaf old man as offerings to his hatred of lawyers and statesmen and bishops.

Dryden, with Swift's early odes in his mind, is reported to have said to him: "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." When he used these words he was thinking,

perhaps, of their flat rhythms and obscure laboured images. But many readers of Swift have held that there were insuperable obstacles to his becoming a poet. They allow that though he had never much music in him, he overcame the early faults, but they hold that he could not overcome a complete lack of the poetic temperament. His verses, they say, are merely his prose pointed by rhyme. He went about the writing of poetry in the reverse of the poetic way. He took a malicious pleasure in pricking the bubble of poetry. The little that remained poetical in the age of Queen Anne, its

> Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billets-doux,

he turned into the nastiness of "A Lady's Dressing-room." The picturesque card game of "The Rape of the Lock" became in his hands the cheating and headaches of "The Journal of a Modern Lady." He translated Ovid's charming "Baucis and Philemon" into a story of a rainy night, two beggars and a shambling, dusty parson. He is the man with the muck-rake in poetry. He prowls about the kitchens and cellars of life and pries into the dust-bins and garbage-heaps like a famished dog. What a pretty and graceful poem Waller would have made out of a subject like "A Lady's Ivory Table-Book"! Swift wrote:

> Here you may read, "Dear charming saint;"
> Beneath, "A new receipt for paint:"
> Here in beau-spelling, "Tru tel deth;"
> There, in her own, "For an el breth."
> Here, "Lovely nymph, pronounce my doom!"
> There, "A safe way to use perfume:"
> Here, a page filled with billets-doux;
> On t'other side, "Laid out for shoes."—
> "Madam, I die without your grace."—
> "Item, for half a yard of lace."
> Who that had wit would place it here,
> For ev'ry peeping fop to jeer?
> To think that your brains' issue is
> Expos'd to th' excrement of his,

In pow'r of spittle and a clout,
Whene'er he please, to blot it out;
And then, to heighten the disgrace,
Clap his own nonsense in the place.[1]

If in the true poet there is always something of Faust, Swift is Mephistopheles, his mission being to drag men's high aspirations down to the dust and worms whence they sprung.

There is much truth in this criticism. Swift examines human life to discover the moths that have eaten into it. If one turns up his verses "On Poetry" in expectation of an account of his idea of poetry, one finds a comparison of poets to vermin and fleas. The "stinking ooze" of life is his theme through a series of poems. If he writes of marriage, Juno has a farthing candle for a torch and Cupid, abashed, makes a quick departure. In his Verses to a Lady who had asked him to write about her in the heroic style, he compares his verses to a rocket that, bursting, scatters a hundred sparks on the heads of the coxcombs below and makes them tingle.

Such a rocket is my Muse:
Should I lofty numbers choose,
Ere I reach'd Parnassus' top
I should burst and bursting drop;
All my fire would fall in scraps,
Give your head some gentle raps;
Only make it smart a while;
Then could I forbear to smile,
When I found the tingling pain
Entering warm your frigid brain:
Make you able upon sight
To decide of wrong and right;
Talk with sense whate'er you please on;
Learn to relish truth and reason![2]

This image describes admirably the wit of some sections

[1] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 35. [2] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 226.

of *A Tale of a Tub* and of certain of the poems written for the amusement of his Irish friends. It hardly describes his wit when he gropes in the cesspool of "The Progress of Beauty" and explores the mysteries of Celia's room. It is somewhat out of place, too, when he wishes he could hang Sir Robert Brass and damns the Irish bishops to the fate of Judas.

There is much truth in the criticism that Swift is Mephistopheles, but it pays no heed to the passion that dictated these poems. If he is Mephistopheles he is also Faust. He conceives of life as a mean house tenanted by madmen and fanatics who like above all things to grovel in the squalor of their physical needs. That is the Mephistopheles in him. But he is not content. When he remembers the vile condition of mankind, he breaks into a bitter fury, a Titanic fury that crushes itself into human words. That is the Faust in him: there is no hour in which he wishes Time to stay. In the vileness and obscenity and hatred of these poems there is *saeva indignatio*. He writes of the Irish Bishops :

> As ancient Judas by transgression fell,
> And burst asunder ere he went to hell;
> So could we see a set of new Iscariots
> Come headlong tumbling from their mitred chariots;
> Each modern Judas perish like the first,
> Drop from the tree with all his bowels burst;
> Who could forbear, that view'd each guilty face,
> To cry, "Lo, Judas gone to his own place,
> His habitation let all men forsake,
> And let his bishopric another take."[1]

I

The most delightful of Swift's poems is "On the Death of Doctor Swift." It was written in 1731 (though not published till 1739) on a maxim of La Rochefoucauld

[1] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 213.

that in the adversity of our best friends we always find something that does not displease us. Swift puts it thus:

> In Pope I cannot read a line,
> But with a sigh I wish it mine;
> When he can in one couplet fix
> More sense than I can do in six;
> It gives me such a jealous fit,
> I cry, "Pox take him and his wit!"
> I grieve to be outdone by Gay
> In my own hum'rous biting way.
> Arbuthnot is no more my friend,
> Who dares to irony pretend,
> Which I was born to introduce,
> Refin'd it first and shew'd its use.

Then as further evidence of the truth of the maxim, he tells what people will say of him when he is dead:

> Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
> A week, and Arbuthnot a day.
> St. John himself will scarce forbear
> To bite his pen and drop a tear.
> The rest will give a shrug and cry,
> "I'm sorry—but we all must die."

The doctors will blame him for not having followed their advice; Curll from the rubbish of his shop will collect three genuine volumes of his Remains; in the conversation at their card-tables his female friends may have a passing thought of him:

> The Dean is dead (and what is trumps?)
> Then, Lord have mercy on his soul!
> (Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)
> Six deans, they say, must bear the pall:
> (I wish I knew what king to call.)

At the clubs some will say that his satirical rage was merely due to discontent and envy; had he been made a bishop, or had the Government filled his purse, no more would have been heard of it. Others, more generous, will claim that he wrote from pure motives to scourge the

vices of his time; that he never made a mock of personal defects; that

> He spared a hump, or crooked nose,
> Whose owners set not up for beaux;

that he never truckled to men of blood or to men of wealth; that he defended Ireland against a monstrous cheat, and kept a steady heart in exile.

> Fair Liberty was all his cry,
> For her he stood prepared to die;
> For her he boldly stood alone;
> For her he oft exposed his own.
> Two kingdoms just as faction led,
> Had set a price upon his head;
> But not a traitor could be found,
> To sell him for six hundred pound.

"On the Death of Doctor Swift" has a resemblance to Pope's "Epistle to Arbuthnot." But in the "Epistle" Pope pictures himself as a lamb among wolves. Swift hints at the evil in his nature as well as the good, throws the question into debate whether he was really a patriot, whether he was really a poet superior to Stephen Duck; and in his humorous, biting way eats into his own reputation. It is true that in the end he leads us to the opinion of himself he wishes us to hold.

> His vein ironically grave,
> Expos'd the fool and lash'd the knave.
> To steal a hint was never known,
> But what he writ was all his own.

"Cadenus and Vanessa" is a masterpiece of wit and fancy. It is not simply an account of the progress of their love for one another, nor simply an attempt to dissuade Vanessa from loving. His odd, piquant humour plays round their relationship with a hundred quips, giving it a light, airy beauty. One feels this in the description of Vanessa. Venus gave her all loveliness and Pallas gave

her all wisdom. But Pallas on second thoughts, as it were by stealth, infused also:

> Some small regard for state and wealth;
> Of which, as she grew up, there staid
> A tincture in the prudent maid:
> She managed her estate with care,
> Yet liked three footmen and a chair.

One sees this also in the central situation of the poem. Cadenus says: "I am old and shabby. With much reading my eyes have lost their brightness. Love has never entered my thoughts, and least of all should it do so now. I have never paid court to ladies except to show my wit. But man is man. I own that I am flattered by your profession of love for me. People will say that it is the old story of the dancing-master and his pupil, that even the wise and learned will succumb to £5000. But I care not. I offer you the affection of a brother."

Vanessa replies: "Have done with such silly romantic notions and look realities in the face as you have taught me to do."

> While thus Cadenus entertains
> Vanessa in exalted strains,
> The nymph in sober words entreats
> A truce with all sublime conceits;
> For why such raptures, flights and fancies
> To her who durst not read romances?
> In lofty style to make replies
> Which he had taught her to despise?

It may be said that it is a defect in the poem that Vanessa should be so virtuous and so learned, an insufferable creature who, when others wished to talk about the weather or the play, "ranged art and nature round," or gave a list of the ancient heroes with a comment on each. But this is Swift's "odd way." Vanessa from all accounts knew very well the difference between Flanders lace and Colborteen, and had begun as early in life as

little Nancy to give her opinion of flounces. Besides, one must remember that she was Venus's girl before she was the girl of Pallas; and when she assumed a pedantic air, it was as if the Queen of Love, all petulance, passion and autocratic grace, had put on a scholar's gown.

"On the Death of Doctor Swift" and "Cadenus and Vanessa" seem to me the greatest of Swift's poems. The wit is easy and full, and it glances over profound depths of feeling; the phrase is plain and felicitous. The one poem that can be set beside them is his "Day of Judgement," where he expresses his misanthropy with a wit that surpasses all his other efforts in this kind. The King of Brobdingnag's comparison of men to vermin, the verdict on humanity of Gulliver's Houyhnhnm master, Swift's account of himself laughing maliciously in his little wherry at the misdeeds of Walpole, fade beside it. So sombre and magnificent are the opening lines that when one reaches the unexpected close, one feels as one might do if Michael Angelo's deity in his "Last Judgement" were transformed into the Earl of Rochester or Charles II., and saint and sinner, devil and angel, were dismissed with a gesture of contempt instead of with a thunderbolt.

> With a whirl of thought oppress'd,
> I sunk from reverie to rest.
> An horrid vision seized my head;
> I saw the graves give up their dead!
> Jove, arm'd with terrors, bursts the skies,
> And thunder roars and lightning flies!
> Amaz'd, confus'd, its fate unknown,
> The world stands trembling at his throne!
> While each pale sinner hung his head,
> Jove, nodding, shook the heavens, and said:
> "Offending race of human kind,
> By nature, reason, *learning*, blind;
> You who, through frailty, stepp'd aside;
> And you, who never fell . . . *through pride*:

You who in different sects were shamm'd,
And come to see each other damn'd;
(So some folk told you, but they knew
No more of Jove's designs than you;)
—The world's mad business now is o'er,
And I resent these pranks no more.
—I to such blockheads set my wit!
I damn such fools!—Go, go, you're *bit.*"[1]

The rhetoric and biting realism of Juvenal, the *sermo pedestris* of Horace, the wit, scurrilous or playful, of Martial, may not be poetry; but to the passionate contempt behind these sixteen lines can one deny the name?

Swift's other passionate poems are not so happy. "Judas" (1731) has too much of the bludgeon in it. In "The Legion Club," where he compares the members of the Irish House of Commons to the inhabitants of a madhouse, there is a shriek of frenzy. "The Beasts' Confession" repeats the moral of the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms": the pious wolf who confesses that he has broken his fast, the donkey who repents of his jests, the cleanly pig, the chaste goat, would have parallels in the lawyer, the chaplain, the doctor and the statesman, if human beings, like four-footed, were content with natural vices; but the realistic pictures in "The Beasts' Confession" are too drab; they are not sufficiently differentiated in colour and outline; the wielder of Alecto's whip easily falls into a monotonous style. "On Poetry" is a "Dunciad" and an "Epilogue" in octosyllabics; it has several withering passages: for instance, the advice to the poets to vent their fury on the alphabet, to fill pages with the initial letters of names, and the invocation to George II:

What justice in rewarding merit!
What magnanimity of spirit!
What lineaments divine we trace
Through all his figure, mien and face!

[1] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 213. Sent in a letter from Lord Chesterfield to Voltaire on August 27, 1752.

But the satire is not conveyed through so vivacious and varied a comedy as in "On the Death of Dr. Swift."

2

The seventeenth century had invented the Mock Epic in which the trivial details of ordinary life are described in heroic terms. Swift thought of inverting the process and describing ordinary life with the lowest and most squalid imagery he could find. Thus he wrote his "Morning" and his "Shower."

> Now Moll had whirl'd her mop with dext'rous airs,
> Prepar'd to scrub the entry and the stairs.
> The youth with broomy stumps began to trace
> The kennel's edge, where wheels had worn the place.
> The small-coal man was heard with cadence deep,
> Till drown'd in shriller notes of chimney-sweep:
> Duns at his lordship's gate began to meet;
> And brickbat Moll had scream'd through half the street.
> The turnkey now his flock returning sees,
> Duly let out a-nights to steal for fees;
> The watchful bailiffs take their silent stands,
> And schoolboys lag with satchels in their hands.

Steele printed these lines in the ninth *Tatler* as an antidote to Easy Writing. "Such janty scribblers are so justly laughed at for their sonnets on Phillis and Chloris, and fantastical descriptions in them, that an ingenious kinsman of mine, of the family of the Staffs, Mr. Humphrey Wagstaff by name, has, to avoid their strain, run into a way perfectly new, and described things exactly as they happen; he never forms fields or nymphs, or groves, where they are not; but makes the incidents just as they really appear." Poetry had fallen to a low level in 1709, when such verses could be hailed as a wonderful discovery. Of course, this is Morning only as it appeared to Swift. Even in a city of a morning there is coolness and stillness; birds perched on every high twig, pinnacle and

spire, pouring out full-throated their song; trees in their stiff, green foliage waiting for the wind to stir them into life. It is characteristic of Swift that he should wish to see things in their ugliness and squalor. "The Shower"[1] ends:

> Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts and blood,
> Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
> Dead cats, and turnip-tops, come tumbling down the flood.

His best mock epic reversed is the pleasant "Baucis and Philemon." Ovid first told this story in the eighth book of his *Metamorphoses*. Jupiter and Mercury once came to a village in Phrygia, the site of which is now a marsh, haunted by cormorants and coots. They asked shelter at many doors and were turned away from all except that of the reed-thatched cabin of Baucis and Philemon. These placed stools for them, stirred the dying fire, heated water to refresh their wearied limbs, and on the table placed a meal of olives, cheese, curds and dried figs. Wine was poured into a carved beechen bowl, and, marvellous to relate, no matter how much was drunk from it, the bowl did not empty. Philemon, suspecting the heavenly origin of his guests, sought to capture his one goose to provide worthy entertainment for them, but it escaped from him and took refuge at their feet. The Gods then made themselves known. They destroyed the village and its inhabitants by a flood; but they saved Baucis and Philemon, transformed their cabin into a temple, and made them its guardians. After many years they parted from life together in accordance with their dearest wish, both in the same moment being changed into trees. The beechen trough in which the strangers bathed their limbs, the couch spread with rushes with its feet of withies, the table with its short leg propped up by a piece of broken earthenware, the little thyme-

[1] First printed in the *Tatler*, No. 238.

scented table with its load of curds, milk and honey—Ovid could not have made them prettier had they been the furnishings of a palace.

In the last years of the seventeenth century Dryden and La Fontaine both made a version of the "good-natured story" of Baucis and Philemon. Probably it was the example of one of them that set Swift to work at it. Swift left two versions of the poem. The first, which remained in manuscript till recently,[1] consists of two hundred and thirty lines. The second, in which there are one hundred and seventy lines, is a revision of the first suggested by Addison; in it the long, characteristically realistic descriptions of the first are cut down or omitted, and one or two touches of operatic supernatural—the burning of the blue light, for instance, when the transformation takes place—are introduced.

Swift's Baucis and Philemon are Kent villagers of his own time. His saints, too, belong to the eighteenth century: they might be two clergymen of a whimsical turn of mind making a visitation; indeed, they might be Jonathan Swift and Thomas Sheridan.

> It happen'd on a winter's night
> As authors of the legend write,
> Two brother hermits, saints by trade,
> Taking their tour in masquerade,
> Came to a village hard by Rixham
> Ragged and not a groat betwixt 'em.

Heine, in a famous essay, describes the pagan gods in exile, but though Bacchus and his companions have put on cowl and gown and Mercury a Dutch merchant's coat, they have not quite lost the magic of their divinity. There is still fire in the kisses of the one, and the other has still all his cunning and wisdom. But the saints have forgotten their halos and shining garments and what they

[1] Forster, p. 163.

signified. They have sunk into the eighteenth century, and are quite at home in the squalor and rain with a torrent of missiles and curses about their heads, and quite at home seated in Philemon's cabin passing the beer-jug and eating the bacon he has toss'd up with batter in a pan.

The best thing in the poem is the account of the transformation of Philemon. Here Addison as usual toned down all that gave character: in the second version there is no mention of his shambling, awkward gait, nor of his carrying a goose to market beneath his gown.

Philemon asks the saints to make him a parson :

"I'm good for little at my days,
Make me the parson if you please."
He spoke and presently he feels
His grazier's coat reach down his heels;
The sleeves new border'd with a list,
Widen'd and gather'd at his wrist,
But, being old, continued just
As threadbare, and as full of dust.
A shambling awkward gait he took,
With a demure dejected look,
Talk't of his offerings, tythes and dues,
Could smoke and drink and read the news,
Or sell a goose at the next town,
Modestly hid beneath his gown.
Contriv'd to preach old sermons next,
Chang'd in the preface and the text,
At christ'nings well could act his part,
And had the service all by heart;
Wish'd women might have children fast,
And thought whose sow had farrow'd last;
Against dissenters would repine,
And stood up firm for "right divine";
Carried it to his equals higher,
But most obedient to the squire.
Found his head fill'd with many a system;
But classic authors . . . he ne'er mist 'em.

"He describes things exactly as they happen," says Steele; and I have added that he has a preference for those where squalor predominates, that he likes to haunt the backyard of life. But while keeping Goody Baucis and dusty Philemon as near the earth as possible, he has described them with sympathy. He had a tenderness for country curates.

3

Many of Swift's verses were written for the amusement of his Irish friends—the Rochforts of Gaulston House and their cousins, Daniel and John Jackson, Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson and the various Lord-Lieutenants with whom he was on an intimate footing. In these poems he is the leader in all kinds of merriment. They explain what it was that captivated and enthralled every one that came near him.

When he visited Market Hill, the house of Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson, he pretended in his ironical way that he had thrust himself upon them, or that he had so long outstayed his welcome that his host and hostess were forced to try all kinds of stratagems to get rid of him. He lorded it at their table, directed the butler in the arrangement of their cellar, cut down their trees, remade their garden paths. Sir Arthur he rebuked for being so deep in metaphysics as to let his affairs run wild.

> But as for me who ne'er could clamber high,
> To understand Malebranche or Cambray;
> Who send my mind (as I believe) less
> Than others do on errands sleeveless;
> Can listen to a tale humdrum,
> And with attention read Tom Thumb;
> My spirits with my body progging,
> Both hand in hand together jogging;
> Sunk over head and ears in matter,
> Nor can of metaphysics smatter;

Am more diverted with a quibble
Than dream of words intelligible;
And think all notions too abstracted
Are like the ravings of a crackt head;
What intercourse of minds can be
Betwixt the knight sublime and me,
If when I talk, as talk I must,
It is but prating to a bust?

He made Lady Acheson take long walks in all kinds of weather—or at any rate he says he did; he mocked her appearance, calling her Skinnybonia, Snipe, and Lean; and blaming her for being too much of a fine lady in her reading, compelled her to pore over "dull Bacon's essays."

At Breakfast he'll ask
An account of my task.
Put a word out of joint,
Or miss but a point,
He rages and frets,
His manners forgets;
And as I am serious,
Is very imperious.
No book for delight
Must come in my sight;
But, instead of new plays,
Dull Bacon's essays,
And pore every day on
That nasty Pantheon.
If I be not a drudge,
Let all the world judge.

In one poem he describes in a quieter mood, without so much ironical heightening, the fun and delights of life at Gaulston—their reading of Lucretius together before breakfast, their adventures rowing on the lake, their hunting of hares, their after-dinner conversation, their procession to bed by candle-light, the difficulty about beds caused by the appearance of unexpected guests.

Now water's brought and Dinner's done:
With Church and King the Lady's gone:
(Not reck'ning half an Hour we pass
In talking o'er a moderate Glass.)
Dan growing drowsy, like a Thief,
Steals off to dose away his Beef,
And this must pass for reading Hammond—
While George and Dean go to Back-Gammon.
George, Nim and Dean set out at four,
And then again, Boys, to the oar.
But when the Sun goes to the Deep,
(Not to disturb him in his Sleep,
Or make a Rumbling o'er his Head,
His Candle out, and He a-bed),
We watch his Motions to a Minute,
And leave the Flood, when he goes in it.
Now stinted in the shortning Day,
We go to Pray'rs, and then to play.
Till Supper comes; and after that,
We sit an Hour to drink and chat.
'Tis late . . . the old and younger Pairs,
By Adam lighted, walk up Stairs.
The weary Dean goes to his Chamber,
And Nim and Dan to Garret clamber.
So when the Circle we have run,
The curtain falls, and we have done.

In "Mrs. Francis Harris's Petition" he makes Mrs. Harris and her fellow-servants portray their idiosyncrasies and stupidities in the rough familiar jingle of the verse. She put her seven pounds four shillings and sixpence (besides farthings) in her purse which was next her smock, and it slipped down and was lost.

But when I search'd and miss'd my purse, Lord, I thought I should have sunk outright.
"Lord! madam," says Mary, "how d'ye do?"—"Indeed," says I, "never worse:
But pray, Mary, can you tell what I have done with my purse?"
"Lord help me!" says Mary, "I never stirr'd out of this place!"
"Nay," said I, "I had it in Lady Betty's chamber, that's a plain case."
So Mary got me to bed, and cover'd me up warm:
However, she stole away my garters, that I might do myself no harm.

"The Grand Question Debated: Whether Hamilton's Bawn should be turned into a Barrack or Malt-House" is in the same vein. A lady's-maid is again the heroine. Her rôle is to urge that the bawn be made into a barracks, for that will bring trumpeters and drummers about the house and a captain on a prancing horse bedaubed with gold lace, who will know how to put down a shabby dean with his Noveds and Bluturks and Omurs. She had fancied how it all would happen :

> Dear Madam, be sure he's a fine spoken man,
> Do but hear on the clergy how glib his tongue ran;
> And "Madam," says he, "if such dinners you give,
> You'll ne'er want for parsons as long as you live.
> I ne'er knew a parson without a good nose;
> But the devil's as welcome, wherever he goes:
> G—d d—n me! they bid us reform and repent,
> But, z—s! by their looks, they never keep Lent;
> Mister curate, for all your grave looks, I'm afraid
> You cast a sheep's eye on her ladyship's maid:
> I wish she would lend you her pretty white hand
> In mending your cassock and smoothing your band:
> (For the Dean was so shabby, and look'd like a ninny,
> That the captain supposed he was curate to Jinny.)

One of his commonest bits of merriment was to describe a friend's small house as much smaller than it really was. He describes the meadows about Dr. Delany's house as so small that a razor could mow them, and his garden as so little that a snail could creep round it. The church of Archdeacon Walls at Castleknock, he says, was so tiny that once a boy took it for a trap in which a blackbird had been caught; and when Dr. Raymond, the Vicar of Trim's family, happened to pass it on a journey, little Miss cried out to have it in her hand. When Stella returned to her lodgings in Dublin from a stay at Charles Ford's mansion, Wood Park, she

> look'd and swore
> The rascal (the coachman) had mistook the door.

At coming in, you saw her stoop:
The entry brush'd against her hoop:
Each moment rising in her airs,
She curst the narrow winding stairs:
Began a thousand faults to spy;
The ceiling hardly six feet high;
The smutty wainscoat full of cracks:
And half the chairs with broken backs:
Her quarter's out at Lady-day;
She vows she will no longer stay
In lodgings like a poor Grisette,
While there are houses to be let.

4

Swift wrote several extremely coarse poems. In some ages such poems do not get greater notoriety than a scribble on a wall can give: in others they get into print. All kinds of them received that honour during the Restoration and the age of Queen Anne—the indecencies of Rochester, the gross pleasantries of Prior, the strong-smelling droppings of Tom D'Urfey and Tom Brown. Swift wrote his coarsenesses chiefly with a satirical purpose. In them, with a harsh, ugly humour like one laughing at the grimaces of his victims while the knout hangs over their heads, he lashes the ageing prostitute; the innocent young creature who marries an old man, then tricks and deludes him; and her who always appears fresh and clean as a May morning till the marriage day is over. He takes us into eighteenth-century bedrooms, where lie around a clutter of paints and washes, powder, false hair and cast garments. He had a microscopic eye for the squalor of the toilet when there were no bathrooms and no running water in every bedroom.

The chief of these poems were written round about 1730, when Swift was over sixty years of age.[1] It is strange

[1] "The Lady's Dressing-Room," 1730. "Cassinus and Peter," 1731. "A Beautiful Young Nymph," 1731. "Strephon and Chloe," 1731. "The Progress of Beauty" was written in 1719 and "The Progress of Marriage" in 1721.

that so old a man and one who knew so much about "sweetness and light" should have imitated the spider and turned all into "excrement and venom." His satirical purpose may be said to excuse him. But the satire of his Chloes and Celias goes in places beyond legitimate bounds, and becomes disgust at the natural working of the organs of digestion and evacuation. It is all very well to make a rough Rabelaisian jest about these: the contempt in which Swift speaks of them is morbid. And it was not only the leisure of the long nights of 1730 that made him write out these poems: similar thoughts had troubled him all his life. He was obsessed by a "vicious fancy" that all the functions of the body are degrading.

CHAPTER X

SWIFT'S STYLE

I

IN several places Swift lays down principles for the writing of good English. One is that it should be simple, clear and intelligible, like the English of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer; another is that it should run on vowels and liquids, like the speech of women, and not on harsh groups of consonants as in High Dutch and the speech of men. These are qualities he emphasizes in all he says of prose style. His best known sentence about it is: "Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a prose style." Gulliver praises the writing of the Brobdingnagians because it was "clear, masculine and not florid." In "A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet," Swift writes ironically: "The *os magna sonaturum*, which, if I remember right; Horace makes one qualification of a good poet, may teach you not to gag your muse, or stint yourself in words and epithets (which cost you nothing) contrary to the practice of some few out-of-the-way writers, who use a natural and concise expression, and affect a style like unto a Shrewsbury cake, short and sweet upon the palate; they will not afford you a word more than is necessary to make them intelligible, which is as poor and niggardly, as it would be to set down no more meat than your company will be sure to eat up." In "A Letter to a Young Clergyman" he counsels him when in doubt as to whether his composition is sufficiently intelligible, to follow the custom of Lord Falkland and read it over to that one of his lady's chambermaids whose

taste has not been corrupted by reading romances or new plays.

A passage in the same letter sums up Swift's opinions on prose style: "When a man's thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first, and his own judgment will direct him in what order to place them, so as they may be best understood. Where men err against this method, it is usually on purpose, and to shew their learning, their oratory, their politeness, or their knowledge of the world."[1]

To be clear, natural and concise, to avoid pedantry and affectation and the imitation of fashionable modes, not to neglect those harmonies which make speech pleasant to the ear, is, according to Swift, to write good English. And his own English is good English in this sense. But there is more in it than these counsels tell us. An anecdote related by Mrs. Pilkington brings this out.

"We supp'd at the Dean's, and I had been reading out, by his Command, some of his (Matthew Pilkington's) prosaick work; he was pleased to say that I acquitted myself so well that I should have a glass of his best wine, and sent Mr. Pilkington to the cellar for it. The Dean in the meantime said to me, 'I would have every man write his own English.' 'To be sure, Sir,' said I, 'that would be best.' 'Ay, to be sure, Sir; you give me an answer, and P—x take you, I am sure you do not understand my meaning.' 'Very possible, Sir, but I certainly understand my own when I have any.' 'Well then, what do you understand by writing one's own English?' 'Why, really, Sir, not to confine one's self to a Set of Phrases as some of our ancient English Historians, Camden in particular, seems to have done, but to make use of such words as naturally occur on the subject.' 'Hush!' says he; 'your

[1] "A Letter to a Young Gentleman," etc., *Works*, vol. iii. p. 204.

husband is coming; I will put the same question to him.' He did so; and Mr. Pilkington answered, 'To be sure, a man ought to write good English.' 'Nay, but his own English; I say, his own; what do you understand by that?' 'Why, Sir, what should I understand?' 'P—x on you for a Dunce,' said he; 'Were your wife and you to sit for a fellowship, I would give her one sooner than admit you a sizar.' "[1]

What is Swift's "own English"? It has not the "vibrant" note of Bunyan; it is hard, round, crystalline. It has not the *je ne sais quoi* of cultured ease one finds in Addison, his terse smoothness, his graceful cadences, his musical flow; nor the brightness and alacrity of Steele. But it is never rugged or awkward. It does not move like one taught by a dancing-master; nor with a jolly buoyant naturalness; but like an athlete sweated down to sinew and muscle who knows how to reach his goal. It is *the* nervous style.

But one should describe it in more positive terms. It is a prose that bites in. In it there is a concentrated force of passion and intellect. He does not make a light impression which the next effaces. His mind was fertile in situations and ideas which to him were as vivid as a great experience is to an ordinary man; and he describes them in the simplest fashion consistent with propriety. A sailor rescued from a vessel which has gone to the bottom, carrying with her a thousand human beings, stammers a few words about the tragedy; and every one listens. Gaudy epithets, sentences balanced like the leaning tower of Pisa or elaborate as a Chinese pagoda, he has no knowledge of, and no need for. With a few plain words, each one, as it were, bearing the scars of struggle, he makes us understand. Swift wrote with a like terrible

[1] *Memoirs of Mrs. Letitia Pilkington.* London, reprinted, 1749, p. 117.

sincerity. Even in the least jotting of the *Journal to Stella* one feels this.

"*April* 6, 1713. I was this morning at ten at the rehearsal of Mr. Addison's play, called *Cato*, which is to be acted on Friday. There were not above half-a-score of us to see it. We stood on the stage, and it was foolish enough to see the actors prompted every moment and the poet directing them; and the drab that acts Cato's daughter, out in the midst of a passionate part, and then calling out, 'What's next?' "[1]

None even of Swift's own successors, of those who carry on his tradition of English prose—Cobbett, Butler, Shaw—have equalled him in penetrating power. One reason for this is obvious, that they are not moved by the same tremendous passion. But another is that he took more care with his writing than any of them. He fits every word securely in its place; he tests every link in his chain-mail. He was, perhaps, not a slow writer; once the idea came to him he may quickly have made some draft of it; but there followed, with all his purely literary works at least, years of correction and addition. The composition of a short work like *Gulliver's Travels* stretches over ten years; *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* took four; *Polite Conversation* and *Directions to Servants* bridge the gulf between his sixtieth and seventieth years. Things like *The Conduct of the Allies* and Prior's *Journey to Paris* were not the labours of a night. A story is told of how once he spent a whole forenoon at Market Hill trying to make butter in a small bottle for the amusement of his hosts. He gave also a world of care and pains to the least trifle he wrote.

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 452.

2

In some verses to Dr. Delany, Swift says that wit is easy to recognize but difficult to define:

> Three gifts for conversation fit,
> Are humour, raillery, and wit:
> The last, as boundless as the wind,
> Is well conceived, though not defined;
> For, sure, by wit is only meant
> Applying what we first invent.

Swift here evidently meant by "wit" the working out of all the possibilities of an "invention," or, as we would say, an imaginative idea. "Invention," as it were, supplies the ingredients, and wit whips them up into a cream. His "invention" hands over the universe to him as a suit of clothes; his wit discovers that the land is a fine coat faced with green, and the sea a waistcoat of water-tabby: that man himself is but a micro-coat or rather a complete suit of clothes with all its trimmings. "Is not religion a cloak: honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt; self-love a surtout; vanity a shirt?" The arithmetical sums he works out to establish the relationship between Gulliver and the Lilliputians, the calculations in the first *Drapier's Letter* as to how many carts of Wood's coin would be necessary to buy a piece of good Irish stuff, the details of the allegory of Peter, Martin and Jack—the satire on the Presbyterian use of Scripture phrases, for instance, in Jack's lapping a piece of the Will about his sore toe—in all these his wit does the same kind of work.

Sometimes his wit is that which Addison distinguished as "false." He was continually making puns, inventing "lies," and labouring at anagrams, acrostics, rebuses and poems, the interest of which consisted in the ingenuity of their rhymes. Pretty nearly always he seems

to have kept up a battledore and shuttlecock of puns with his Irish friends. His most brilliant was his utterance of Virgil's line when a lady at one of Lord Carteret's assemblies knocked over a violin with her mantle:

O Mantua miserae nimium vicina Cremonae.

When he turned so eagerly to this "false wit" as a source of pleasure, one is not surprised that it should often pass into his greater work. He exercises it when he says that the disciples of Jack were called "holders forth" because they protruded first one long ear, then another, to their congregations; and when he says that Partridge cannot be alive because gentlemen who buy his almanacs exclaim they were sure no man alive ever writ such damned stuff; and when he recalls the objection to the spirit entering an assembly of modern saints, that the Cloven Tongues never sat upon the Apostles' heads while their hats were on. Indeed, everywhere in Swift will be found touches of this "false wit" that seizes on superficial resemblances between the things compared without entering into their true nature. This gives the tone to many of his pages. He refuses to have any sympathy with the Enthusiasms, Summum Bonums, Ideal Utopias that he holds up to scorn. He cleverly lays hold on some ludicrous aspect of them, and with this as his bladder of folly, whips them out of doors to the accompaniment of harsh laughter. How different is the mockery of Cervantes, who makes you laugh at Don Quixote, but at the same time almost makes you in love with his belief in his Melesinda and Micomiconica and his palaces beneath the sea!

3

Swift's art, it may be said, is the art of irony. No other writers who have made use of irony, Lucian and Pascal,

for example, have used it so consistently or with so much effect. From *The Battle of the Books* to *Directions to Servants* it is the chief medium of his satire. He turned to it naturally when he wished to praise or blame. Such passages as the following occur on every page of *The Journal to Stella:*

"O Lord, how much Stella writes; pray, don't carry that too far, young woman, but be temperate to hold out."[1]

"Ah, why do not you go down to Clogher, nautinauti-nautidear girls; I dare not say nauti without dear."[2]

"I sat two or three hours at Lord Treasurer's. . . . I said there was something in a treasurer different from other men; that we ought not to make a man a bishop who does not love divinity, or a general who does not love war; and I wondered why the Queen would make a man Lord-Treasurer who does not love money. He was mightily pleased with what I said."[3]

Two of these passages are examples of what Swift called raillery, the finest part of conversation, which is to say something that at first appears a reproach or reflection; but by some turn of wit, unexpected or surprising, ends always in a compliment. But raillery is just a particular form of irony. Invert it: say something that appears a compliment and ends always with a reproach, and you have Swift's most usual form of satire.

The first paragraph of the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* brings us at once into contact with nearly all the characteristics of his irony.

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 17.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 73.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 203–4.

"I am very sensible what a weakness and presumption it is to reason against the general humour and disposition of the world. I remember it was with great justice, and a due regard to the freedom both of the public and the press, forbidden upon several penalties to write or discourse, or lay wagers against the Union, even before it was confirmed by Parliament, because that was looked upon as a design to oppose the current of the people, which besides the folly of it, is a manifest breach of the fundamental law that makes this majority of opinion the voice of God. In like manner and for the very same reasons, it may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent to argue against the abolishing of Christianity at a juncture when all parties appear so unanimously determined upon the point, as we cannot but allow from their actions, their discourses, and their writings. However, I know not how, whether from the affectation of singularity, or the perverseness of human nature, but so it unhappily falls out, that I cannot be entirely of this opinion. Nay, though I were sure an order were issued for my immediate prosecution by the Attorney-General, I should still confess that in the present posture of our affairs at home and abroad, I do not yet see the absolute necessity of extirpating the Christian religion from among us."

Here he assumes the grave and serious air of the preacher, ruffles his gown and gesticulates in the solemn received way. A glint in his eye when he says that the opinion of the majority is not the voice of God, makes us suspect his purpose. But it is not clear to us till in the quietest of tones, without emphasis, as if it were a matter of course, the second half of the last sentence drops from his lips.

Grave circumstance, a serious air, truculent asides, astonishing conclusions quietly spoken, a relentless, even an unhallowed tone, all resulting in bitter, hard laughter

—these are the characteristics of Swift's irony. It is impossible to tear them apart and examine each separately, for in every second sentence all are present. Take, for instance, the closing sentences of the paragraph in the *Argument*, where he argues that the employment of the revenues of 10,000 parsons to make 200 young gentlemen "easy," may not be wholly an advantage. For, first, it may be thought necessary to have one man in each parish who can read and write; and, second, the race will suffer if it has nothing to trust to but the scrofulous, consumptive productions furnished by men of wit. "We ought to beware of the woman's folly, who killed the hen that every morning laid her a golden egg." The harsh gibe, the truculent laughter, the preposterous assumption, the feigned seriousness, all are here.

Yet though these characteristics of Swift's irony may not be treated separately, it can be pointed out that in different works they are mingled in different proportions and vary in intensity. On occasion the gaiety of *The Battle of the Books* almost persuades us that he has become good-natured. His gibes and jeers have always some cruelty in them: but one can distinguish between the harshness of the *Partridge Papers* and the fierce, desolating bitterness of the account of the Struldbrugs.

In *A Tale of a Tub* there is so great a wealth of monstrous absurdities that one must suppose that Swift wrote it with fierce delight: in the Preface, for instance, where he scatters the hordes of preface-mongers like chaff: the ingenious poets who must have something insigne, recens, indictum ore alio—like him who compared himself to the hangman and his patron to the patient; those writers who must tell their readers whether they wrote fasting or over a bottle or after having spoken to Mr. What d'y' call'm; and those who always begin with a sentence like "When every little would-be wit

takes pen in hand, 'tis vain to enter the lists." Or take the run of ideas in the Introduction from the comparison of poetry to the gallows (poets after climbing the ladder by slow degrees, are in the end turned off by fate) to the mockery of Dryden in the passage where the Grubæan Sage declares that his quill is worn to the pith in pros and cons upon Popish plots and meal-tubs, and that his understanding and conscience are threadbare and ragged with perpetual turning. All through both sections Swift has Grub Street in his eye: particular evils, not the wild exaggerations of fancy, are his theme. All through, except for one muttered aside which has the effect of a muttered curse, he preserves the mask of the sage of the garret. He has not, he says, intermingled one grain of satire. Yet in spite of the assumed gravity and in spite of his determination to strike and scatter without mercy, there is abandonment, a certain fierce joy in the irony. Gaily truculent he rides to battle.

In many of Swift's works is something of this mood, though it never has again the irresponsible air of *A Tale of a Tub*: in the *Partridge Papers*, for instance, in the first *Drapier's Letter*, and in "A Voyage to Lilliput." But this frolic of truculent gaiety gives way to concentrated bitterness in *A Modest Proposal*, and to a savage and frenzied indignation in "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms."

One realizes how wide is the range of Swift's irony if one considers the variety of the puppets he uses as his channels of expression. When a writer is ironical he pretends to be more simple, more innocent, less seeing than he is. It is but a step from this to set up an imaginary figure who will speak for him. Swift appears as the capering sage of *A Tale of a Tub*, as the self-satisfied author of the *Journey to Paris*, as the upright, good-natured Gulliver, as the grave pedantic fool of *Polite Conversation*, as the old practitioner of *Directions to Servants*.

Compare the last two of those mentioned—the friend of Cibber and Theobald who wrote *Polite Conversation* and the "old practitioner" who wrote *Directions to Servants.*

Simon Wagstaff had passed more time than any other man of his age and country in visits and assemblies; and had observed with grief how both gentlemen and ladies were frequently at a loss for questions, answers, replies and rejoinders. His concern was much abated, however, when he discovered that these defects were not due to lack of material but to inability to handle it. "For instance, one lady can give an answer better than ask a question; one gentleman is happy at a reply; another excels in a rejoinder. One can revive a languishing conversation by a sudden surprising sentence." He therefore set himself to making a *Polite Conversation,* taking twenty-eight years to the task—twelve years to collect and sixteen years to digest and polish. He compares his work with the victories of Charles XII.; pours contempt on his contemporaries, the Gays, Popes, Arbuthnots and Youngs; suggests that his book be made obligatory in schools, forestalls the criticism that it may make good conversation vulgar by teaching it to footmen and lady's-maids. He ascends from one absurdity to another, sometimes lightly or querulously scornful as in the exchange of monosyllables at the card-table and the masquerade, sometimes gravely pedantic as in the circumstance with which he describes the dinners he had attended.

The irony of *Directions to Servants* is more contemptuous, much more hard and bitter. The "old practitioner" who gives advice there to his fellow-servants is a feelingless rogue beside Simon Wagstaff. "If an humble companion, a chaplain, a tutor, or a dependent cousin happen to be at table, whom you find to be little regarded by the master and company (which nobody is readier to

discover and observe than we servants), it must be the business of you and the footman to follow the example of your betters, by treating him many degrees worse than any of the rest; and you cannot please your master better or at least your lady."[1] But even in *Directions to Servants*, behind the mask of irony his features can relax into a smile. "Make the misses," he says to the Tutoress or Governess, "read French and English novels, and French romances, and all the comedies writ in King Charles II. and King William's reigns, to soften their nature and make them tender-hearted."[2]

4

Humour is that attitude to life which takes account of its weaknesses and defects, treats them with laughter and a certain amount of sympathy. One may therefore characterize the humour of any author by defining each of these elements and saying how he mingles them.

1. In a sense Swift deals with the whole life of his time—kings, queens, maids of honour, farmers, tavern-keepers, beggars, children. But when one looks closely at his work, one realizes that he deals with them not as individuals but as members of a state. The defects of public life are the subject of his satire. There may be found one or two realistic sketches of men and women in their intimate lives, like Patrick in the *Journal to Stella*, or Glumdalclitch in *Gulliver's Travels*, or Baucis and Philemon, but they are exceptions. There are no figures in his pages who typify some one human weakness like the Archbishop of Granada or Sancho Panza or Harpagon. Even his terrible animosities like those against Marlborough, Lord Wharton, the Earl of Nottingham, were in the main excited by their political conduct. Personal

[1] "Directions to Servants," *Works*, vol. xi. p. 316.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 360.

malevolence is not at the root of his satire. More than once he deplored the carrying of the quarrels into private relationships. It is true that he sometimes forgot his own counsel. A man's mind is not divided into separate compartments between which there is no communication; and sometimes in the elation of triumph, as in 1710, when he, whom Lord Somers and Halifax and Godolphin had pushed aside coldly, became "Jonathan" to Harley and St. John, personal feelings came to the top; but they were never for long dominant.

Human life in the mass, then, as it appears at Court levees or in debating assemblies, in Church convocations, in the servants' dining-hall, or at my lady's card-party, are his theme. And he looks at it through spectacles of a peculiar make that he has described many times. As succinct an account of them as he has given is that in the *Meditation on a Broomstick*, which he inserted in Boyle's *Meditations* and read to the Countess of Berkeley:

"But a broomstick, perhaps, you will say, is an emblem of a tree standing on its head; and pray, what is man, but a topsy-turvy creature, his animal faculties perpetually mounted on his rational, his head where his heels should be, grovelling on the earth! And yet with all his faults, he sets up to be a universal reformer and corrector of abuses, a remover of grievances, rakes into every slut's corner of Nature, bringing hidden corruption to the light, and raises a mighty dust where there was none before; sharing deeply all the while in the very same pollutions he pretends to sweep away."[1]

Man is an earthy creature, the slave of his physical needs and desires. He said this more emphatically in the allegory of the Yahoos and when, in the ninth section of

[1] *A Meditation upon a Broomstick*, vol. i. p. 334.

A Tale of a Tub, he declared that the very same principle that influences a bully to break the windows of a whore who has jilted him, naturally stirs up a great prince to raise mighty armies and dream of nothing but battles and victories. But though man is by nature so miserable a worm, he is always overesteeming himself. Out of his physical desires he creates a fantastic thing he calls love; he forces himself to feel an affection for his friends of which he is not capable, and mourns for their death with a sorrow which has no place in his heart. He thinks himself able to make elaborate systems of government, to explain by his philosophies all things in the heavens above and in the waters beneath, and to criticize freely divine revelation. If he recognized his limitations he might live a not unhappy life. But instead he gets astride his fancy and is the cause of infinite torture to himself.

2. One who had read nothing of Swift, told that this was his outlook on life, would be puzzled to know how he could bring laughter from it. But we do laugh when we read his works—at the Lilliputians, at the Brobdingnagians, at the Yahoos, at those who make the church a rendezvous of gallantry, and are more concerned about a fall of one per cent. in the stocks than at the ruin of Christianity, at the insolence of servants and at the trivialities and vulgarities of polite conversation, at the squire bringing his caravan of copper to the shop of the silk mercer, and at Peter running his nose against a post because he was predestined to do so. And there is good reason why we should laugh. Swift himself, as he writes, and readers who put themselves in his place, are above the mêlée of earthly desire, conceit, affectation and madness. Everywhere before them is the contrast between what man pretends to be and what he is. He thinks he is Mirabel; he is Tom Neverout. He thinks he is Demosthenes; he is little Grildrig. He thinks he is *animal*

rationale; he is only *capax rationis*. He thinks he is the most magnificent of created beings; he is the nastiest of them all. At this revelation of human weakness and insignificance he laughs with the laughter akin to that he attributes to God in his Judgement Day—*disillusionment*. Sometimes it goes beyond this and is heightened by scorn; for though he pretends to look on life calmly and without anger, he is often transported into a passion and throws his darts of satire with cries of fury. This explains the obscenities with which some of his pages are strewn; and the flashes of contempt which occur even in the *Drapier's Letters*.

The kind of laughter in Swift is often compared to that of Rabelais, for whom he had a great affection. But Rabelais draws from another source. He never thinks meanly of life. Man by nature is of a noble disposition and naturally turns to virtuous actions. "Do what thou wilt" was the only clause in their rule that the Thelemites had to observe; and though it was intended for the free, well-born, well-bred members of that honest company, it points to Rabelais's own trust in life. He takes an uproarious boisterous delight in it. To him life contains nothing disgusting or to be shamefaced about.

Swift took the directly opposite view. The Yahoos are his physical man; and when he sets down an obscenity it is with a contempt like that with which the Houyhnhnms discovered that Gulliver's clothes were not his skin. The account of the pranks of the maids of honour is intended to be nasty; but not so the open indecencies at the birth of Gargantua and in the nursery of Gargantua. Rabelais laughs joyously, jubilantly; Swift with bitter contempt. He is like the chambermaid in *Directions to Servants* who had so many pretty ways of curing her mistress's vapours.

The laughter of disillusionment, contempt and scorn

dominates in Swift, but one can hear, too, other kinds of laughter.

Often when one in all seriousness puts forward a preposterous idea, one stops when half-way or three-quarters through and laughs at its absurdity. Swift on occasion can do this. It is a refinement of his humour. One cannot but feel that he was genuinely amused by his conception of Gulliver's relation to the Houyhnhnms when he describes Gulliver on his return to England keeping his nose well stuffed with rue, lavender and tobacco because he found the smell of Yahoos so offensive; or when Jack uses the large skin of parchment on which he had engrossed his father's will as a nightcap when he went to bed, as an umbrella in rainy weather, and as a liniment for his sore toe.

3. Is there any "sensibility" in Swift, any sympathy with or pity for the victims of his satire, any fellow-feeling towards them, any of that emotion which is so essential and so characteristic in Cervantes, Shakespeare, Le Sage, Fielding, Sterne? M. Angellier, in speaking of Swift in an analysis of humour in his *Vie et Œuvres de Robert Burns*, says No. And at a first glance one is ready to agree with him; for among so much contempt and indignation where is there any room for genial feeling, pity, sympathy, sensibility, call it what you will?

In Swift's life certainly this element was present: it comes to the surface in his relations with Stella and Vanessa, with Addison, Congreve, little Harrison, Mrs. Long, the Earl of Peterborough, old Mrs. Wesley. And many passages in the *Journal to Stella* are informed by it; for instance, the account of Patrick, Swift's servant, purchasing a linnet for Mrs. Dingley. "I went last night to put some coals on my fire, after Patrick was gone to bed; and there I saw in a closet a poor linnet he has bought to bring over to Dingley: it cost him sixpence and is as

tame as a dormouse. I believe he does not know he is bird: where you put him there he stands, and seems to have neither hope nor fear; I suppose in a week he will die of the spleen. Patrick advised with me before he bought him. I laid fairly before him the greatness of the sum and the rashness of the attempt; showed how impossible it was to carry him safe over the salt sea: but he would not take my counsel and he'll repent it."[1]

Sensibility, however, of which many traces can be found in the records of his life, does not pass easily into his writings. This is intelligible; for he was first and foremost a satirist, not a portrayer of life, and could not allow the edge of his satire to be turned. There is very little of it in *Directions to Servants* and in *A Tale of a Tub*. He gloats with scorn over the misfortunes of Jack, and pursues with coarse jeers the butler, the footman, the groom, the chambermaid. Yet there are passages even in those two works that he sets down not so much in indignation and contempt as in amusement: when, for instance, he tells the butler in bottling wine to fill his mouth full of corks together with a large plug of tobacco, "which will give to the wine the true taste of the weed, so delightful to all good judges of drinking."

Such feelings of amusement are more frequent in *Polite Conversation*. To Lady Smart, Miss Notable, Tom Neverout, and Sir John Linger he has given a thin dramatic life; and one finds oneself taking a pleasure in them for their own sake. Did not Swift laugh more heartily than usual, more like his great successors in humour, when he made the Derbyshire squire, Sir John Linger, say:

"I protest I can't eat a bit, for I took a share of beef-

[1] *Journal to Stella*, p. 95.

steak and two mugs of ale with my chapman, besides a tankard of March beer, as soon as I got out of bed.

Lady Answerall: Not fresh and fasting, I hope?

Sir John: Yes, faith, madam; I always wash my kettle before I put my meat in it."

CHAPTER X

Closing Years

I

The years 1726 and 1727 were a turning-point in Swift's life. In each of them he made a visit to England, and renewed his old friendship with Gay, Arbuthnot, Pope and Bolingbroke. On October 28, 1726, *Gulliver's Travels* was published. But what makes these years so significant is that Hester Johnson was dangerously ill throughout the greater part of them, and that she died on January 27, 1727.

Various motives induced him to make the journey to England in the spring of 1726. He wished again to see his old friends, with whom a year or two before he had renewed a correspondence; he had to make arrangements about the publication of *Gulliver*; and perhaps at the back of his mind he hoped that he might be able to exchange the Deanery of St. Patrick's for an English living of equal value.

Arbuthnot introduced him to the Princess of Wales. She received him with her usual graciousness, and Swift at once gave a taste of his quality: he had been informed, he said, that she loved to see odd persons, and that having sent for a Wild Boy from Germany, she had a curiosity to see a Wild Dean from Ireland. He became acquainted with Mrs. Howard, the Prince of Wales's mistress, at the same time, and this acquaintance developed into something like friendship. Pope, by 1726, had settled down in his villa at Twickenham, and in this year was busying

himself in the arrangement of the gardens of Marble Hill, on which Mrs. Howard had built a mansion that nearly ruined her. Swift, too, was soon on familiar jesting terms with her. He declared that since Pope was her gardener, he would take charge of her wine; and he made fun of her expenditure in lines that may have sounded a little harsh in the gay fête that went on all that summer on the banks of the Thames, for they were the truth. He makes Marble Hill say to Richmond Lodge, the summer residence of the Prince and Princess of Wales:

> My house was built but for a show,
> My Lady's empty pockets know:
> And now she will not have a shilling,
> To raise the stairs, or build the ceiling;
> For all the courtly madams round
> Now pay four shillings in the pound;
> 'Tis come to what I always thought;
> My dame is hardly worth a groat.[1]

Swift was on excellent terms with both royal ladies, and when he left for Ireland in October 1726, he asked a gift from each of them, from Mrs. Howard of the value of one guinea and from the Princess of the value of ten guineas. Mrs. Howard at once obeyed; the Princess promised to send him some medals, but she forgot or changed her mind. Still for a time Swift bore no ill-will. He had, in conversation with the Princess, drawn her attention to the wretched state of Ireland, and explained his chief remedy for it—the use of Irish stuffs by the Irish people; and to show what kind of weaving could be done in Ireland, he sent a specimen of Irish poplin to Mrs. Howard. *Gulliver's Travels* appeared in November 1726; and on November 17, Mrs. Howard, who had learned or guessed the name of the author, sent him a letter of raillery thanking him for the cloth, asking sufficient to make dresses for the three young Princesses, and giving

[1] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 155.

the measurements according to the manner of the mathematical tailors of Lilliput and Lagado. But this was his last real communication with the Princess. She became Queen in June 1727, when he was paying his second visit to England. He attended a Court and kissed hands; but he heard no more of either the medals or the Irish poplin. In "On the Death of Doctor Swift" he took his smooth revenge:

> From Dublin soon to London spread,
> 'Tis told at court, "the Dean is dead."
> Kind Lady Suffolk in the spleen,
> Runs laughing up to tell the Queen.
> The Queen, so gracious, mild and good,
> Cries, "Is he gone? 'Tis time he should.
> He's dead, you say; why, let him rot:
> I'm glad the medals were forgot.
> I promis'd him, I own; but when?
> I only was a princess then."

During his visit of 1726, Swift had two interviews with Sir Robert Walpole. Walpole must have decided that it would be to his advantage to meet the chief engineer of rebellion in Ireland. Swift, on his side, had a faint hope that by setting forth sincerely and plainly the grievances of the Irish people, he might win them some relief; and at the back of his mind lurked the thought that success in his negotiations would make it possible for him to accept a living in England—perhaps even a living in the Government's gift—an English Deanery or Bishopric. He knew that this was his last opportunity, for he had papers ready for the printer in his bag, in which his hatred of Walpole was made known to the world. They had two interviews, but nothing came of either. How could they have been successful when Swift was on the point of printing the sixth chapter of "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," where a chief minister is described as one who is exempt from joy and grief, love and hatred, pity and

anger; whose only passions are a violent desire of wealth, power and titles; and who never tells a truth but that you should take it for a lie? A man with such things burning in his mind could not be a good negotiator. Walpole for his part made no serious effort to break down Swift's defences of scorn and pride. At the second meeting Swift tried to set forth the wrongs of Ireland—the denial of the rights of Englishmen, the interruptions to trade, absenteeism, corrupt methods of appointment to positions in Church and State—but Walpole listened with such impatience that Swift desisted. A day or two later he sent him a memorandum in which these abuses were detailed at some length; Walpole not only did not acknowledge it, but made use of these interviews for party purposes, suggesting that Swift had indicated that in return for a pardon and perhaps some *douceur*, he would stop his attacks on him. Swift damped down his anger to make it more fierce: then, a year or two later, let it blaze up in the picture of Walpole as Sir Bob, the brazen minister of state, the dext'rous steward who lends his master a groat "yet has his cote and hood."

> A dex'trous steward, when his tricks are found,
> Hush-money sends to all the neighbours round;
> His master, unsuspicious of his pranks,
> Pays all the cost and gives the villain thanks.
> And, should a friend attempt to set him right,
> His lordship would impute it all to spite;
> Would love his favourite better than before,
> And trust his honesty just so much more.
> Thus families, like realms, with equal fate,
> Are sunk by premier ministers of state.[1]

In these years Stella was dying. She had never been strong, and her nerves must have received many a shock from living so near a man of Swift's violence. The revelation of his relations with Esther Vanhomrigh had deeply

[1] *Poems*, vol. i. p. 214, "An Epistle to Mr. Gay."

troubled her sensitive nature. It was for the benefit of her health as well as his own that he had spent the whole summer of 1725 in the solitude of Quilca. When he left her to make his journey to England in 1726 she was comparatively well: at any rate her life was not in danger, though she suffered from a whole circle of those weaknesses that steal away life before one is aware of it. For the first two months of his stay he was at ease about her in spite of one or two disturbing sentences in Mrs. Dingley's letters. Then John Worrall, his trusted friend, wrote to him that she was dying. This struck Swift low. He wrote back to him, going over pitifully the story of their long, dear friendship, the only thing that made life worth living for him. Yet even in the agony of his grief he betrayed his strange and peculiar nature. He refused to go to Ireland to be beside her on her death-bed. He would not for the universe, he says, bear that trial. The marks of her sorrow would be so terrible that they would redouble his grief. He wrote too: "Let her know I have bought her a repeating gold watch, for her ease in winter nights. I designed to have surprised her with it; but now I would have her know it, that she may see how my thoughts were always to make her easy."[1]

Stella did not die in this year. She made so good a recovery that he crossed to England in 1727, fearing secretly perhaps another crisis, but hoping to the point of expectation that it would not happen. But towards the end of his visit, late in August, news again came that she was dying. He was again in agony. He could not bear to open his letters from Ireland. He wrote with angry cynicism that the last act of life was a ridiculous tragedy at best, but that it was a bitter aggravation that his best friend should go first. He said from his heart that he could hold up his sorry head no longer. "Here is a

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 318.

triple cord of friendship broke," he writes, "which hath lasted thirty years, twenty-four of which in Ireland. I beg, if you have not writ to me before you get this, to tell me no particulars, but the event in general; my weakness, my age, and my friendship will bear no more. . . . I will tell you sincerely, that if I were younger, and in health, or in hopes of it, I would endeavour to divert my mind by all methods in order to pass my life in quiet; but I now want only three months of sixty. I am strongly visited with a disease that will at last cut me off, if I should this time escape; if not, I have but a poor remainder, and that is below any wise man's valuing. I do not intend to return to Ireland so soon as I purposed; I would not be there in the very midst of grief."[1]

Stella lingered on to the end of January (1727-8). Swift was entertaining a company to dinner when the news was brought him of her death; but he did not break up the feast, determined to the last not to show publicly how close had been their friendship. When his guests had gone he began to write an account of Stella's life and character—a strange thing for a sorrow-stricken man to do. But in the moment of such a shock one is bewildered. Perhaps he felt vaguely that by writing about her through the night he would lighten the intolerable burden in his heart. He never finished that writing.

When she died Swift was sixty years of age, with eighteen years still to live. Up to 1727 his life had not been unclouded; now came darkness and storm. His friends in Ireland must often have thought that her death had affected him little. He was gayer and more humorous than ever when he visited them in their country houses, or when he entertained them on Sunday nights at the Deanery. He threw himself with fury into the fight for preserving the privileges of the Irish Church; and lost

[1] To Sheridan, August 29, 1727, *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 416.

no opportunity of scoffing at the Government of Walpole and its treatment of Ireland. He exerted himself unceasingly to further the interests of those persons, clergymen, poetesses, young students, who seemed to him worthy. But in all his activities there was a feverish violence that showed that he was suffering from a secret wound.

One sees what Swift's daily life was in these years from the anecdotes in Sheridan's *Life*, from the *Memoirs of Mrs. Letitia Pilkington*, and from his poems and pamphlets. But the chief source of information is his *Letters*. They, however, give another picture from all other sources. One would conclude from Sheridan and Mrs. Pilkington that he was in the hey-day of life, full of vitality, ready every morning for new jests and new fights. The *Letters* are thick with gloom. For months every year, we learn from them, he was afflicted by deafness and giddiness, which cut him off from all company. In them he paints himself as embittered with life, cursing England and Ireland, and tolerating with scorn even the admiration of his fellow Dubliners. He is a true old man, scribbling a few trifles by candle-light after dinner, and tearing them up before going to bed. The friends with whom he sometimes makes merry are only a sort of middling acquaintance, whom he tolerates because he can order them about at will.

One of the problems of Swift's life is, How could he have thrown himself into the "high jinks" described by Mrs. Pilkington—daubing her face with a wine-soaked cork, for instance—and at the same time write the sentences of profound misanthropy of the letters to Pope and Bolingbroke: that, for instance, in which he says that his rage is so ignoble that it descends even to resent the folly and baseness of the enslaved people among whom he lives? He himself has given an answer. "Sweeten your

milk with mirth and motion," he wrote to Pope. He had advised him to try asses' milk for his ailments, and to make it perfectly efficacious, he added the counsel: "Descend, in the name of God, to some other amusements, as common mortals do. Learn to play at cards, or tables, or bowls; get talking females, who will go on or stop at your commands; contrive new trangrams in your garden. . . . Sweeten your milk with mirth and motion." [1] He followed his own advice. He scribbled trifles. He gathered about him a large acquaintance of middling sort of people, ready to obey his whims. He practised *La Bagatelle*. But the physician could not heal himself. His practice of *La Bagatelle* reminds one often of the sunshine that flashes for a minute between two thunder-clouds.

2

About a year after Stella's death, in a letter to a clergyman whose wife had died, Swift wrote: "I am truly grieved at your great loss. Such misfortunes seem to break the whole scheme of man's life, and although time may lessen sorrow, yet it cannot hinder a man from feeling the want of so near a companion, nor hardly supply it with another."[2] Perhaps he was thinking of his own loss as he wrote this; but if so, it is the only reference to it in his *Letters*. He writes gaily to his friends, as if no great change had taken place in his life, railing at Patty Blount for wanting to be a fine lady, and urging Gay to buy an annuity with the riches he had got from the *Beggar's Opera*. But his fits of giddiness and deafness came more frequently and lasted longer; and there begin to occur in his *Letters* those terrible outbursts of cynical misanthropy, which went on increasing in violence till the weariness of old age overcame him. In May 1727

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 218.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 50.

he set out on a tour through Southern Ireland in the company of his friend, Tom Sheridan; and about the middle of June he went to pay a visit, which stretched out many months, to Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson at Gosford Castle, near Market Hill, Co. Armagh. He was broken in body and spirit, and he had to get away from Dublin, a place charged for him with memories.

Sir Arthur Acheson's residence (now called Gosford Castle) lay a mile from the village of Market Hill and eight miles from Armagh. It is a large building with an imposing battlemented tower and wide flag-paved terraces on three sides. The spacious park in which it is set is surrounded by a magnificent amphitheatre of trees. Here, as at Quilca, Swift must have felt himself at the heart of dreaming Ireland. He enjoyed the same kind of life as there, cutting down old trees, improving the alleyways and superintending the labourers. He wrote humorously of himself:

> How proudly he talks
> Of zigzags and walks,
> And all the day raves
> Of cradles and caves;
> And boasts of his feats,
> His grottos and seats;
> Shows all his gewgaws,
> And gapes for applause;
> A fine occupation
> For one in his station!
> A hole where a rabbit
> Would scorn to inhabit,
> Dug out in an hour;
> He calls it a bower.[1]

He liked his stay so much that at one time he resolved to buy a hill called Drumlack, near Market Hill, and rename it Drapier's Hill, and build a house on it. He never carried out his resolution: it was a frolic, one of

[1] "My Lady's Lamentation," *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 95.

those resolutions made in a moment of enthusiasm in defiance of circumstances. But Swift would not allow that he had dropped the scheme because the Dean of St. Patrick's could not live far from the smoke of battle; he set it down to the incompatibility of his host's temper and his own. Sir Arthur Acheson, he says, was always so "rapt in speculations deep" that he was no companion for him, who liked better to read *Tom Thumb*. He thought, he said, metaphysics the ravings of a cracked head, but Sir Arthur was always soaring beyond the skies in an attempt to understand Malebranche and Fénelon. Several biographers take this excuse seriously, as if Swift were really finding fault with his host, but it was one of his railing compliments. His real opinion of Sir Arthur was that he was a man of sense and a scholar. He showed how great was his esteem for him by returning to Market Hill for several months both in the summer of 1729 and the summer of 1730.

Swift wrote several poems at Market Hill, which later got into the hands of printers and were published. The chief of them is "Hamilton's Bawn," in which Lady Acheson's maid urges her mistress to have a bawn on their estate turned into a barracks, so that there may be handsome soldiers about, who will come prancing into the courtyard to the rattle of drums, and put such a seedy, shabby *scholard* in his place. In another, he makes Lady Acheson lament his tyranny over her, his calling her Skinnyboniana, Snipe, and Lean, and his forcing her to take long walks, and read dull Bacon's *Essays* instead of books of plays. In "Dean Swift at Sir Arthur Acheson's" he makes her fabricate all kinds of excuses for curtailing his visit.

> His brace of puppies how they stuff!
> And they must have three meals a-day,
> Yet never think they get enough;
> His horses too eat all our hay.

O! if I could, how I would maul
His tallow face and wainscot paws,
His beetle brows, and eyes of wall,
And make him soon give up the cause!

Must I be every moment chid
With Skinnyboniana, Snipe and Lean?
O! that I could but once be rid
Of this insulting tyrant Dean![1]

No more than the "Dean's Reasons for not Building at Drapier's Hill" must these verses be taken as his real opinions of his host and hostess. What they do show is that Swift's stay at Market Hill was not a *retraite*, not a time of meditation and withdrawing into himself. Swift was incapable of that even in his sorrow. He could not be at rest in his *arrière boutique*. He had to be jumping down ditches, or making butter come in a bottle, or finding all the possible rhymes for an outlandish Irish name, or lampooning some one or other, his host or a bishop or Sir Robert Walpole.

Swift returned to Dublin from his first visit to Market Hill in February 1728-9; and the account he gives of his life there in the following years is a record of gloom. "I dine alone, or only with my housekeeper," he writes. "I go to my closet immediately after dinner, there sit till eleven, and then to bed. The best company here grows hardly tolerable, and those who were formerly tolerable, are now insupportable. This is my life five nights in seven. Yet my eyes are hurt with reading by candle-light, so that I am forced to write and burn whatever comes into my head."[2] Again he writes: "I dine tête-à-tête five days a week with my old Presbyterian housekeeper, whom I call Sir Robert, and so do all my friends and neighbours. I am in my chamber at five, there sit alone till eleven,

[1] "Dean Swift at Sir Arthur Acheson's," *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 93.

[2] To Pope, *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 127.

and then to bed. I write pamphlets and follies merely for amusement, and when they are finished or I grow weary in the middle, I cast them into the fire, partly out of dislike, and chiefly because I know they will signify nothing. I walk much every day, and ride once or twice a week, and so you have the whole state of my life."[1] In the surrounding scene there was nothing to relieve his depression. The Irish people was in a slough of misery; the Irish squires robbed him of his tithes and rode him down in the streets of their villages; he maintained that the Irish bishops were for the most part thieving Englishmen, and that those who were native Irish had taken their cue from them. John Gay, whom he had counselled like an elder brother, died. Arbuthnot, whose only fault was a slouch in his walk, died too. Swift was not an easy gentleman, able to bear these losses lightly; age had not hardened his heart to steel, though he often wished it had done so.

But this dark picture is not the whole truth about these years. On occasion, especially when he is inviting Pope and Bolingbroke to come to Ireland, he paints his lonely life in the Deanery as almost desirable. He has a large store of excellent wine and cider. He walks or rides many miles every fair day: he is known as the best walker in Dublin. Sometimes he visits a country clergyman for a few weeks; or arranges to play a game at backgammon with his Vicar-Choral and his wife; or sends a chicken and a bottle of wine to Mrs. Dingley, announcing that he will dine with her, if it is convenient. Two nights of the seven were not lonely, Sundays and Thursdays: on the first of these five or six friends used to force themselves into the Deanery and drink his wine; and on the second he was in the habit of riding out to Dr. Delany's villa, where he was welcomed by all his titles—Dean, Drapier,

[1] To Pope, January 15, 1730–1, *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 194.

Bickerstaff, and Gulliver—and became the life and soul of the merriment.

Delany, when Swift first became acquainted with him about 1716, was a Junior Fellow of Trinity College, a Tory, and notorious for his attempts to annoy the Whig Provost of the College. In spite of his Toryism, years brought him several preferments. In 1725 he, in association with Dr. Helsham, Swift's doctor, and Professor of Natural History at Trinity, built a villa at Glasnevin, about two miles from Dublin, where he entertained his Trinity friends and their protégés. Here Swift met the three ladies whom he calls his Triumfeminate: Mrs. Grierson, who, without any formal education, had acquired a marvellous knowledge of languages; Mrs. Barber, a woollen-draper's wife, who had written a book of poems; and Mrs. Sican, also a poetess. On the terraces of Delville, too, he jested with Mrs. Letitia Pilkington,[1] from whose *Memoirs* one learns best what kind of mirth seasoned his conversation at this time.

"When the Dean was at Bellcamp,[2] at the house of the Reverend Doctor Grattan, he wrote to Doctor Delany to come and dine with him, mighty Thomas Thumb, and her Serene Highness of Lilliput, meaning my husband and me.

"Accordingly we went; the Dean came out to meet us; and I, by agreement hiding my face, Mr. Pilkington told him they had picked up a girl on the road, and desired to know whether they might bring her in. He, guessing who it was, said: 'Let her show her face, and, if she be likely, we'll admit her.' On this I took down my fan, and said: 'Oh, indeed, sir, I am.' 'Well then,' said he, 'give me your hand.' He led me into a parlour, where

[1] See her own account of herself in her *Memoirs*.

[2] Mrs. Pilkington was first introduced to him at Bellcamp, the home of the Grattans.

there were twelve clergymen, and said: 'Those fellows coming in had brought a wench with them; but,' added he, 'we'll give her a dinner, poor devil! and keep the secret of our brethren.' As most of the gentlemen knew me we were very merry on this odd introduction.

" 'Pox on you, you slut,' said the Dean: 'you gave me a hint for my *Polite Conversation* which I have pursued: you said it would be better to throw it into dialogue, and suppose it to pass amongst the great, I have improved by you.'

" 'Oh, dear sir,' said I, "tis impossible you should do otherwise.' 'Matchless sauciness!' returned he.

" 'Well, but I'll read you the work,' which he did with infinite humour, to our high entertainment.

"It was Christmas-time, and froze very hard. The Dean, meditating revenge, set the wine before a great fire, the corks of the wine being secured with pitch and rosin, which began in a little while to melt: no sooner did the Dean perceive they were fit for his purpose but he slyly rubbed his fingers on them, and daubed my face all over. Instead of being vexed, as he expected I would, I told him he did me great honour in sealing me for his own. 'Plague on her,' said he, 'I can't put her out of temper': yet he seemed determined to do it if possible, for he asked the company if ever they had seen such a dwarf; and insisted that I should pull off my shoes, till he measured me: to this I had no inclination to submit; but he was an absolute prince, and resistance would have little availed me; so when I obeyed he said: 'Why, I suspected you had either broken stockings or foul toes, and in either case should have delighted to have exposed you.' He then made me stand up against the wainscot, leaned his hand as heavy as he could upon my head, till I shrunk under the weight to almost half my pro-

portion: then making a mark with his pencil, he affirmed I was but three feet two inches high."[1]

This may be over-seasoned. She was making the most of the little intimacy she had been allowed. Swift liked Letitia the first moment he saw her, when her fragility and youth and sprightliness made him say, "Poor little thing!" And her wit and audacity held his favour. Yet it is doubtful if she was ever so intimate with him as she pretends. Had their friendship been close, the score of pages about Swift would have stretched out to a hundred, for the little adventuress knew very well that her references to him were the most interesting part of her book. Yet in spite of exaggerations her narrative has a core of truth, for it is only a highly-coloured version of what others tell.

At Delany's villa—Delville it was named—Swift met also some ladies of higher rank in society than Mrs. Pilkington and the Triumfeminate—Miss Kelly, Mrs. Pendarves (later Mrs. Delany), and Miss Donellan, daughter of the Chief Baron of Ireland. He demanded homage from them, and tyrannized over them, but with so much wit that they valued his friendship and were hurt if any shadow fell over it. There is a charming gaiety about some of Miss Kelly's early letters to Swift—that, for instance, in which she sends him a hangman's wages, 1s. 1½d. in return for his correction of her verses; and though he was Master of Ceremonies at the dinner-party Mrs. Pendarves describes, it did not degenerate into a saturnalia. "On Thursday Phill and I dined at Dr. Delany's; there we met Miss Kelly, Lord Orrery, the Dean of St. Patrick's, Mr. Kit Donellan, Dr. Helsham —a very ingenious entertaining man. In such company you may believe time passed away very pleasantly. Swift

[1] *Memoirs of Mrs. Letitia Pilkington*, edited by Iris Barry, p. 409.

is a very *odd companion* (if that expression is not too familiar for so extraordinary a genius); he talks a great deal and does not require many answers; he has infinite spirits, and says abundance of good things in his common way of discourse. Miss Kelly's beauty and good-humour have gained an entire conquest over him, and I come in only *a little by the by*."[1]

Undoubtedly there were quiet periods in Swift's later years, and days consumed in a fiery sunshine of mirth, but there is no less doubt that the prevailing tone was gloomy and sad. The clouds of pessimism and misanthropy gathered closer and thicker about him. His economical habits hardened into avarice, though it must always be remembered that he was avaricious with a purpose, and that he had a maxim which, he thought, should be written in diamonds, that one should have money in the head but not in the heart. He became irritable, and sought quarrels beyond those for which he had a legitimate excuse. In St. Patrick's Cathedral were several monuments to famous men whose descendants were high in rank or in worldly importance. Swift took it into his head to write to these asking them to repair their family monuments and provide small yearly sums for their maintenance. Several ignored his demand, and Swift was so furious with them that he had inscriptions cut on the tombs castigating their indifference. To the Duke of Schomberg, the great Dutch general of William

[1] *Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, 1861, vol. i. p. 396. To Mrs. Granville, January 24, 1732–3. On April 5 of the same year she writes: "The day before we came out of town, we dined at Dr. Delany's, and met the usual company. The Dean of St. Patrick's was there, in very good humour; he calls himself '*my master*' and corrects me when I speak bad English, or do not pronounce my words distinctly. I wish he lived in England. I should not only have a great deal of entertainment from him, but improvement."

III., whose body lay in the cathedral, there was no memorial, and when his granddaughter refused Swift's request for fifty pounds to erect one, he erected it at his own expense with the inscription: "Hic infra situm est corpus Frederici, Ducis de Schomberg, ad Bubindam occisi, A.D. 1690. Decanus et Capitulum maximopere etiam atque etiam petierunt, ut haeredes Ducis monumentum in memoriam Parentis erigendum curarent: sed postquam per epistolas, per amicos, diu ac saepe orando nil profecerc, hunc demum lapidem statuerunt, saltem ut scias, hospes, ubinam terrarum Schombergenses cineres delitescunt.[1] Plus potuit fama virtutis apud alienos quam sanguinis proximitas apud suos. A.D. 1731." Swift had a notice of what he had done printed in the Dublin and London papers, and according to his own story, so angered the Prussian Envoy to England, the husband of one of Schomberg's granddaughters, that he declared aloud at the King's Levee that Swift had attempted to make a quarrel between England and Prussia—a declaration that George II. himself publicly capped with, "God damn Swift."

He carried on several other quarrels with equal acrimony. In 1729 the Corporation of Dublin offered to present him with the Freedom of the City enclosed in a gold box. A certain Lord Allen, who, according to Swift, had often professed friendship for him, objected to this honour on the ground that he was a violent Tory and Jacobite. Swift, therefore, on the day of presentation, refused to receive the Instrument of Freedom till he had related his services to the Whigs when they were out of office, and his services to the poor tradesmen of Dublin at all times whether they were Whig or Tory. He spoke

[1] Swift had intended the last part of this sentence to run: Saltem, ut scias viator indignabundus, quantilla in cellula tanti ductoris cineres delitescunt. *Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 230, note 5.

with restraint, confuting the charge by the weight of his argument. But he was not content with this. He wrote besides a poem called "Traulus," in which he hurled at Lord Allen all the slanders and lies about himself and his family that the gutter could suggest. Lord Allen's father had been Lord Mayor of Dublin and his grandfather had been a well-known architect. Swift writes:

> Who could give the looby such airs?
> Were they masons, were they butchers?
> Herald, lend the Muse an answer
> From his *atavus* and grandsire:
> This was dexterous at his trowel,
> That was bred to kill a cow well:
> Hence the greasy clumsy mien
> In his dress and figure seen;
> Hence the mean and sordid soul,
> Like his body, rank and foul;
> Hence that wild suspicious peep,
> Like a rogue that steals a sheep;
> Hence he learnt the butcher's guile,
> How to cut your throat and smile.[1]

In 1733 there was a push by the Government for repealing the Test Act. The Lord-Lieutenant had instructions to further it, and he made this known to the Dissenters. But the opposition of the Irish clergy and the House of Commons was so strong that he could do nothing. In the debates a certain Richard Bettesworth, a Member of Parliament and Serjeant-at-Law, did not show himself to be sound on this fundamental question, and therefore he became for Swift a marked man. No sooner were these debates over than a Bill was put forward for the remission of the tithe on hemp and flax to which, as being likely to reduce the incomes of the lower clergy, Swift was strongly opposed. Here again Bettesworth crossed his path. To discredit him he wrote, therefore,

[1] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 243.

some scurrilous verses—"On the Words Brother Protestants and Fellow Christians."

> An inundation, says the fable,
> O'erflow'd a farmer's barn and stable;
> Whole ricks of hay and stacks of corn
> Were down the sudden current borne. . . .
> The generous wheat forgot its pride,
> And sail'd with litter side by side;
> Uniting all, to show their amity,
> As in a general calamity.
> A ball of new-dropp'd horse's dung,
> Mingling with apples in the throng,
> Said to the pippin plump and prim,
> "See, brother, how we apples swim."

Then he proceeded:

> Thus to a dean some curate sloven
> Subscribes, "Dear sir, your brother loving."
> Thus all the footmen, shoeboys, porters,
> About St. James's, cry, "We courtiers."
> Thus Horace in the house will prate,
> "Sir, we, the ministers of state."
> Thus at the bar the booby Bettsworth,
> Though half a crown o'erpays his sweat's worth;
> Who knows in law nor text nor margent,
> Calls Singleton his brother sergeant.[1]

This was a mean attack. Bettesworth swore that he would cut off Swift's ears, bearded him in a house where he happened to be visiting, and addressed him so roughly that Swift's friends, fearing violence, intervened. Later, his threats of violence continuing, a rabble of the Liberty of St. Patrick's (the Kevan Bail) banded themselves together to protect their Dean. Sheltered by them and his age and his clergyman's gown, Swift continued to pour out his coarse invective on Bettesworth.

[1] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 252.

Hobbes, Tindal, and Woolston, and Collins, and Nayler,
And Muggleton, Toland, and Bradley the tailor,
Are Christians alike; and it may be averr'd,
He's a Christian as good as the rest of the herd.
Knock him down, down, down, knock him down. . . .

At length his old master (I need not him name),
To this damnable speaker had long owed a shame;
When his speech came abroad, he paid him off clean,
By leaving him under the pen of the Dean.
Knock him down, etc. . . .

Though he cringed to his deanship in very low strains,
To others he boasted of knocking out brains,
And slitting of noses and cropping of ears,
While his own ass's zags were more fit for the shears.[1]
Knock him down, etc.

Swift's violence and bitterness appear also in his attacks on the Irish Bishops and on the Irish House of Commons.

He had never been on good terms with the dignitaries of his Church; which is intelligible when one remembers that nearly all of them had been appointed by a Whig Government. His opinion of them when moved by no special deed of iniquity, he gives in *The Verses on St. Patrick's Well.*

With omens oft I strove to warn thy swains,
Omens, the types of thy impending chains.
I sent the magpie from the British soil,
With restless beak thy blooming fruit to spoil;
To din thine ears with unharmonious clack,
And haunt thy holy walls in white and black.
What else are those thou seest in bishop's gear,
Who crop the nurseries of learning here;
Aspiring, greedy, full of senseless prate,
Devour the church, and chatter to the state?[2]

In 1731 he had a special reason for abominating them. They had put before the House of Lords two Bills that

[1] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 257. [2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 222.

Swift thought would do great harm to the lower clergy and to the Church of Ireland as a whole. In the one they proposed that where a living brought in more than £300 a year, the surplus should be set aside for the endowment of new livings; the other said that where there was no vicarage and the living was worth more than £100 a year, the incumbent must within three years build a house worth half the income of these years. These proposals may have been ill-considered, but the Bishops had nothing to gain from them; and the evils against which they were directed—non-residence and parishes so large that they could not be properly ministered to—called out for a remedy. Certainly they were not the proposals of flagitious men. But Swift attacked them savagely. He taunted the bishops with their own large secure incomes, and urged that the Bills should not pass unless their bishoprics were divided. He insinuated that they would use their power to compel clergymen to build in the windiest places and the most remote from their churches. On the pretence that he was not fully acquainted with the terms of the Bills, he lowered the sum of £100, which made the building of a house compulsory, to £55; and ridiculed the idea of a clergyman with £55 a year and six of a family, building in three years a house worth £77, 10s. He urged the farmers to withstand the Bills; for if they passed, he said, their parsons would follow them round their fields to see that not a tithe of an ear of corn escaped; for according to the Scottish proverb, "A hungry louse bites sore."

The Irish Commons threw out the Bills. Swift had played well his part in their rejection, controlling the mad rage in his heart and attacking them with the ease and strength of his best days. But in his verse he let down the flood-gates to his scorn and poured forth a lava of savage vituperation.

Old Latimer preaching did fairly describe
A bishop, who ruled all the rest of his tribe;
And who is this bishop? and where does he dwell?
Why truly 'tis Satan Archbishop of Hell.
And He was a primate, and He wore a mitre,
Surrounded with jewels of sulphur and nitre.
How nearly this bishop our bishops resembles!
But he has the odds, who believes and who trembles.
Could you see his grim grace, for a pound to a penny,
You'd swear it must be the baboon of Kilkenny.[1]

Till his mind became a blank he pursued the bishops with his acrid invective.

The Irish House of Commons—the Irish Club, as he contemptuously called it—had earned his approval by its attitude to these two Bills; it did not keep it long. In 1735 it passed Bills cancelling the tithe on pasturage and commuting the tithe on flax and hemp for a fixed sum. Swift opposed them, and was justified in doing so, for by both the clergy were despoiled, by the one for the benefit of the squires, and by the other to bolster up the linen trade. But he did not oppose them with reason. His anger at what the Commons had done became a mad frenzy.

Tell us what the pile contains?
Many a head that has no brains.
These demoniacs let me dub
With the name of Legion Club.
Such assemblies, you might swear,
Meet when butchers bait a bear:
Such a noise, and such haranguing,
When a brother thief's a hanging:
Such a rout and such a rabble
Run to hear Jackpudding gabble:
Such a crowd their ordure throws
On a far less villain's nose.[2]

The bitterness with which he carried on all his

[1] *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 246.
[2] The Legion Club, *ibid.* p. 264.

quarrels, and the extremes to which he pushed them, prove that he was really fifty times more miserable than he had ever been. They prove, too, that the misanthropy and pessimism that run through the letters of these years were not a mere affectation put on for his English friends. He is not, he writes to them, a patriot: it is rage and resentment and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly and baseness that make him write. He is so indifferent to the world that he would lie abed all day if decency and dread of sickness did not drive him from it. Life is a ridiculous tragedy which is the worst kind of composition. He plays at small game in Ireland and sets the beasts a-madding from the same spirit of mischief as makes a monkey overthrow all the dishes in the kitchen for the pleasure of seeing them tumble and hearing the clatter they make. He would gladly die, but he cannot stomach the thought of dying in Ireland like a poisoned rat in a hole.

It was the opinion of Mrs. Pilkington that by 1733 Swift had begun to show signs of lunacy, and that by 1736 he was much advanced in it. She tells two or three stories in support of her opinion: how he beat her because her husband had carried a manuscript to London in obedience to his commands, and beat her again when she returned it to him; how at a Lord Mayor's banquet, thinking that the Lord-Lieutenant had not treated him with sufficient courtesy, he addressed him rudely as "You Fellow, with the blue string"; and how on one occasion, having invited two clergymen to take the air with him in a coach, he knocked their heads together and belaboured them, so that they had to cry out for assistance.

Though Mrs. Pilkington was a vulgar little adventuress, she had wit and an eye for the kind of things we should like to know about Swift's daily life. She often writes in a senseless and pretentious way, yet she had shrewd insight. Almost certainly these three stories are

true, though they may have happened years apart, not, as she implies, in close proximity. But the deduction she draws from them, that they were signs of approaching lunacy, is wrong. All one can allow is that his misanthropy and his rage at human weaknesses and his tyrannical inclinations had taken so complete control over him that he could no longer bridle his eccentric wit. His peevishness and irritability were not due to lunacy in any medical sense. He was an old man, seventy years and upwards, outraged by the spectacle of misery and wrong about him. He had carried his life as a burden for almost ten years. His passions were beyond the control of his judgement, and he had no longer any friend who could enter into his mind, temper his rage, and soften his anger. Sheridan was not that friend. It is said that Swift quarrelled with him and turned him out of the Deanery because at his request Sheridan kept a diary of his parsimony and avarice: which proves that Sheridan was not fitted to be his bosom friend. *La Bagatelle* and all its works were useless to him now. His memory was going, his eyesight failing, his fits of giddiness and deafness were almost continuous. He was confined to Dublin and its neighbourhood because he could no longer bear the strain of a journey on horseback. He had become the ghost of a ghost and the shadow of a shadow. He lived in terror that after all he should suffer the calamity he feared most, loss of reason, and celebrated his birthdays by reading the third chapter of the Book of Job.

Yet even in these dark last years there were some patches of light. The city of Dublin did honour to his work as a patriot. The city of Cork made him a freeman, and paid no attention to the rudeness with which he received their first advances. He determined to use his remaining strength in writing a life of the patriotic Lord Mayor of Dublin, Sir Humphrey French, and asked his

printer, George Faulkner, to gather material. The immense popularity of his poem, "On the Life and Death of Dr. Swift," when it was published in London in 1738, may have given him some pleasure. It was all very well for him to speak of scribbling trifles between dinner and bedtime. He must have felt a tremendous might in himself when he thought of this poem, published in his 71st year,[1] and when he looked at the unfinished prose work —*Directions for Servants*—that lay in his desk.

Some of the new friends that crowded round him in these last years were parasites, and took advantage of his senility to further their own ends. But there were others who soothed his troubled mind and brightened his life. William Richardson and his daughter Katherine, of Coleraine, near Londonderry, sent him many gifts—salmon, wine, usquebaugh, shirts of fine linen—which he acknowledged in letters of gay raillery of the kind that used to charm Stella and Vanessa. His cousin, Mrs. Whiteway, was his "necessary woman": she wrote his letters, attended to his domestic wants, and cared for him in sickness. She never had to endure those explosions of wrath of which his other friends were afraid. His notes to her when she was ill are full of sympathy and true understanding.

From 1740 till his mind completely darkened, he was in great misery and much pain, and wished hourly that death would release him from expectations of further torture. He was groping about blindly on the confines of reason. "If I do not blunder, it is Saturday, July 26, 1740," he wrote to Mrs. Whiteway. "If I live till Monday I shall hope to see you, perhaps for the last time." And earlier in the same year he had written: "The whole of last night I was equally struck as if I had been in Phalaris's brazen bull, and roared as loud for eight or nine hours.

[1] Written in 1731.

I am at the instant unable to move without excessive pain, although not the one-thousandth part of what I suffered all last night and this morning." In this desolation he had from his cousin as much comfort and attention as any man can have whose last illness is not simply a gradual extinction of consciousness.

During these last years, too, he was unceasing in works of benevolence and mercy. From the time he became Dean of St. Patrick's and earned an income beyond his immediate needs, he had used his money to help those in distress, his practice being to lend it with interest in sums of from £20 to £100 to small tradesmen. Now he made a will giving his total savings of £8000 for the building of a hospital for the insane; and busied himself in arranging for a site and a building. He took an interest in the children of many of his acquaintances, nominating them to the Blue-Coat School and reconciling them to their parents if they proved wayward. He used to say that he had no natural affection for blood relations, and that he regarded kinship as a disqualification for his favour; but his actions belied his words. He gave £100 to a son of Mrs. Whiteway that he might be apprenticed to a surgeon; he followed closely his relative Deane Swift's career at Oxford, and when it met with his approval, gave him warm letters of introduction to his London friends. His last letter was a recommendation of another Swift, Mr. William Swift, to the Lord Chancellor as a deserving young gentleman and as one who had not forgotten his learning, though he had studied law.[1]

Swift's life, then, in his last years of reason, was not utter black night. In spite of misery and pain he was pursuing good works in hot blood: he was reverenced and loved by a whole nation; and for his bodily and mental infirmities there was at hand tender care and

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. vi. p. 177.

affection. Had he died on June 8, 1741, one might have said of him: "The sweetest canticle is *Nunc dimittis*." But he lived three and a half years longer. He was certified as insane on August 17, 1742, and died on October 19, 1745. It is clear from his demeanour during his insanity, and from the remarks he let fall, that he was dimly conscious of the state into which he had fallen. This excites horror. All his life he had said that perhaps God does not mean us to be happy here; again and again he had professed detestation of the state of mankind, because of its lunatic fancies and earthiness, and because of the ills to which it is subject. Now in his own life he terribly exemplified the worst he had said of it. No wonder that men for two centuries have contemplated the terrible nightmare of these last three years with the blank and desperate eyes with which they contemplate the sufferings of Ugolino in his prison.

3

The pitiful story of the last three years is best told in the narratives of his cousin, Mrs. Whiteway, and his relative, Deane Swift.

"I was the last person whom he knew," wrote Mrs, Whiteway to the Earl of Orrery on November 22, 1742. "and when that part of his memory failed, he was so outrageous at seeing anybody, that I was forced to leave him, nor could he rest for a night or two after seeing any person, so that all the attendance which I could pay him was calling twice a week to inquire after his health, and to observe that proper care was taken of him, and durst only look at him while his back was towards me, fearing to discompose him. He walked ten hours a day, would not eat or drink if his servant stayed in the room. His meat was served up ready cut, and sometimes it would

lie an hour on the table before he would touch it, and then eat it walking.

"About six weeks ago, in one night's time, his left eye swelled as large as an egg, and the lid Mr. Nichols, his surgeon, thought would mortify, and many large boils appeared upon his arms and body. The torture he was in is not to be described. Five persons could scarce hold him for a week from tearing out his own eyes, and for near a month he did not sleep two hours in twenty-four; yet a moderate appetite continued, and what is more to be wondered at, the last day of his illness, he knew me perfectly well, took me by the hand, called me by my name, and showed the same pleasure as usual in seeing me. I asked him if he would give me a dinner. He said, 'To be sure, my old friend.' Thus he continued that day, and knew the doctor and surgeon, and all his family so well, that Mr. Nichols thought it possible he might return to a share of understanding, so as to be able to call for what he wanted, and to bear some of his old friends to amuse him.

"But, alas! this pleasure to me was but of short duration; for the next day or two it was all over, and proved to be only pain that had roused him. He is now free from torture, his eye almost well, very quiet, and begins to sleep, but cannot, without great difficulty, be prevailed on to walk a turn about his room; and yet in this way the physicians think he may hold out for some time."

Eighteen months later, on April 4, 1744, Deane Swift wrote:

"As to the story of 'O poor old man,' I inquired into it. The Dean did say something upon his seeing himself in the glass, but neither Mrs. Ridgeway nor the lower servants could tell me what it was he said. I desired them to recollect it by the time when I should come again to

the Deanery. I have been there since; they cannot recollect it. A thousand stories have been invented of him within these two years, and imposed upon the world. I thought this might have been one of them, and yet I am now inclined to think there may be some truth in it; for on Sunday the 17th of March, as he sat in his chair, upon the housekeeper's moving a knife from him as he was going to catch at it, he shrugged his shoulders, and rocking himself, said, 'I am what I am, I am what I am,' and about six minutes afterwards repeated the same words two or three times over. His servant shaves his cheeks and all his face as low as the tip of his chin once a week, but under the chin and about the throat, when the hair grows long it is cut with scissors. Sometimes he will not utter a syllable; at other times he will speak incoherent words; but he never yet, as far as I could hear, talked nonsense or said a foolish thing.

"About four months ago he gave me great trouble; he seemed to have a mind to talk to me. In order to try what he would say, I told him I came to dine with him, and immediately his housekeeper, Mrs. Ridgeway, said, 'Won't you give Mr. Swift a glass of wine, sir?' He shrugged his shoulders, just as he used to do when he had a mind that a friend should not spend the evening with him; shrugging his shoulders, your Lordship may remember, was as much as to say, 'You'll ruin me in wine.' I own I was scarce able to bear the sight. Soon after he again endeavoured, with a good deal of pain, to find words to speak to me; at last, not being able, after many efforts, he gave a heavy sigh, and, I think, was afterwards silent.

"This puts me in mind of what he said about five days ago. He endeavoured several times to speak to his servant—now and then he calls him by his name—at last, not finding words to express what he would be at,

after some uneasiness, he said, 'I am a fool.' Not long ago the servant took up his watch that lay upon the table to see what o'clock it was; he said, 'Bring it here,' and when it was brought, he looked very attentively at it. Some time ago the servant was breaking a large stubborn coal; he said, 'That's a stone, you blockhead.'

"In a few days, some very short time after guardians had been appointed for him, I went into his dining-room where he was walking; I said something very insignificant, I know not what; but instead of making any kind of answer to it, he said, 'Go, go,' pointing with his hand to the door, and immediately afterwards, raising his hand to his head, he said, 'My best understanding,' and so broke off abruptly and walked away."

Some critics and biographers of Swift set down all that displeases them in his work to the inborn rancour and bitterness of his nature. Edward Young, the poet of "Night Thoughts," who knew him well, says:

"His wit had been less wild if his temper had not jostled his judgement. If his favourite Houyhnhnms could write, and Swift had been one of them, every horse with him would have been an ass, and he would have written a panegyric on mankind, saddling with much reproach the present heroes of his pen: on the contrary, being born amongst men, and, of consequence, piqued by many, and peevish at more, he has blasphemed a nature little lower than that of the angels, and assumed by far higher than they: but surely the contempt of the world is not a greater virtue than the contempt of mankind is a vice."[1]

But this is off the mark. I have not made little of the rage and even cruelty with which he pursued his political enemies; nor of his relentlessness when his friends crossed him; nor of his ambitious pride, which was so easily

[1] Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition.*

wounded. These, however, are not the fire from which his works come; they are only the boulders and rubbish and smoke it throws up with it. That fire is his *saeva indignatio* at the miserable state man has brought himself to. The best clue to Swift is his own epitaph:

Hic depositum est corpus
JONATHAN SWIFT, S.T.D.[1]
Hujus Ecclesiae Cathedralis Decani;
Ubi Saeva Indignatio
Ulterius Cor Lacerare Nequit.
Abi Viator
Et Imitare, Si Poteris,
Strenuum Pro Virili Libertatis Vindicem.
Obiit Anno 1745
Mensis Octobris Die 19
Aetatis Anno 78.

It may perhaps seem a little ridiculous that any one in the eighteenth century should become furiously angry at the corruption and irrationality of man, that old story, the burden of all the theologies and many philosophies. But, then, very few have ever really believed it. Men are incorrigibly optimistic about themselves, and always in their darkest hours imagine that they can set their faces to the light when dawn comes. Those who accept the Christian Faith give a formal assent to it. A number, like Anatole France's speculative philosophers, hold it as proved by logic and observation, and maintain it in a cool, detached way, as if it were a law of Nature which it is of no use to strive against. A few it stings into fury or despair. But even of those few, some find a way of escape.

Pascal, for instance, draws as dark a picture of the state of man as Swift. He is set down in a little corner of the universe between the Infinite and the Nothing,

[1] Usually printed S.T.P., following the reprint of Swift's Will in the *Miscellany* of 1746. The Monument in St. Patrick's has S.T.D.

not knowing whence he came nor whither he is going. He tries to discover the laws of Nature; but his sense and his reason, the instruments with which he is provided, are somewhat blunt for the task; and besides, they fight against one another. He might be expected to know himself; but he is an inconstant being, a recorder whose ventages and stops differ from individual to individual, and even in the same individual are never the same. Man knows less of himself than he knows of mathematics. He is full of corruption; but he will not acknowledge it to himself, and covers it up under scarlet robes and ermines and jewels, or confronts those who would detect it with sounding trumpets and compact battalions. He is the puppet of his imagination; on the one hand it deludes him as to his true nature, makes him appear to himself far more splendid than he is; and on the other hand it raises before him terrible bogeys which frighten him out of his reason. He cannot sit quiet in his chamber and think; he must always be dancing or making verses or hitting a ball with a stick or hunting the hare. Through these he reaches forward to a happiness he never grasps; through these he forgets the death of his son and the enmity of his dearest friend and his miserable state.

But Pascal saw a way by which man might escape from his wretched condition: through that grace of which the Christian Faith speaks.

Swift had no way of escape. He was nominally a Christian; he went through the offices of the Church with reverence; no clergyman was more punctilious. And in all sincerity he gave assent to the mystical doctrines of revelation. There is no *arrière pensée* in his attack on Toland and Collins. But allowing to these their fullest significance, it would be idle to pretend that they caused the gloom to thin in which he saw human life enshrouded.

He burned with indignation against the weakness and

folly of man. Human life with its physical ills, its loss of friends, the miseries of old age, the prospect of death, did not seem to him desirable. Yet, overwhelmed and tortured as he is, he never suggests that there are alleviations in the Christian Faith. He is passing through Inferno; and the grey serenity of Purgatory and the ecstasies of Paradise are too remote from him to be real. In this attitude Swift is the most tragic of figures.

One must not suppose, however, that he himself had any philosophy or theology about all this. He was not a philosopher; he did not seek to co-ordinate things or explain them. To attempt that seemed to him the grossest of follies. He stood in the present; his rage was the result of its impact on his fiery, determined mind.

Suppose a man to discover a new country where the people dress like himself, but believe in human sacrifice and secretly practise it. Suppose him to get some hint of this. Then as he sits at the card-table, or leans back at his ease in the coffee-house, or pays compliments at court, or makes jests for the fine ladies, or gives directions to the common people, all his mirth and good-fellowship and feelings of humanity will be poisoned by the thought of this secret abomination. With profound pity contempt will mingle. His passion will be all the more violent because it is restrained. He may jest, but his lightest jests will make his hearers smart and tingle.

Swift was such a man. He liked to be merry and free; there were few people of his acquaintance whom he did not make his friends; there are times when he takes a jubilant delight in life, goes down the stream with all his sails set. But in the midst of his joy rises the thought that mankind is corrupt and vicious at bottom. Wherever he turns he sees evidence of its stupidity, negligence, selfishness and cruelty. His coachman puts his hay into his barn so carelessly that it heats; a great minister of state

sacrifices the Church to politics; whole peoples slaughter one another for a trifle. This dashes his mirth with bitterness, turns his love of individuals into contempt of humanity, freezes up the inborn affections of his nature, makes him cold and hard, and rouses in him a desire for revenge against life like that of a mediæval hermit lashing his back into blood. "I have ever," he says in the famous sentences to Pope giving the foundation of his misanthropy, "hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is towards individuals: for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one and Judge Such-a-one: so with physicians—I will not speak of my own trade—soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth."[1]

All the circumstances of his life intensified that indignation at the follies and vices of mankind. When he was still the author of only *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*, Addison said that he was the greatest genius of his age; and certainly this is true, if one takes all the attributes of genius—originality in invention and execution, depth of feeling, power of thought—and strikes a balance. But he never obtained the position in the world he desired. For a time he was lifted up to be the counsellor and friend of ministers of state and proudly dispensed patronage, only after a short period to be hurled down into what seemed to him a miserable exile. He was peculiarly sensitive to the sorrows and afflictions that accompany human life, and strove to avert them from himself; but the more he drove them off the more they came flocking about him. He was bound to two women by the most intimate ties; but he became the unwilling means of blotting out the light from the life of one of

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 277.

them; and with unspeakable anguish he had to watch the death of the other. He looked forward with terror to old age; and his own old age was worse than he feared. The thought that he might become insane haunted him from the time of his first fit of giddiness and deafness; and in spite of his frenzied struggles to keep them off, the clouds of insanity settled round him.

When one reads accounts of Swift as a tragic figure, as torn asunder between the love of Mr. Such-a-one and his hatred of humanity, one is inclined to protest that he is after all a humorist, that he provokes us to laughter, not to tears. And there is justice in the protest: he made it himself when he said that it was not in Timon's manner that he intended to show his misanthropy. "I have got materials towards a treatise, proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*, and to show it would be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy, though not in Timon's manner, the whole building of my *Travels* is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion."[1] All that stupendous force of indignant passion which threatens to carry everything headlong before it, comes surging about us as laughter, at times bitter, harsh laughter, at times the laughter of him who knows that the game is up. Vesuvius paints the sky black and red; but instead of running for shelter we run forward to catch the falling fire. Is this a piece of dæmonic subtlety to induce us to take to our hearts what will sear and wither them? Or are *Gulliver's Travels*, *Directions to Servants*, *Polite Conversation*, and *A Tale of a Tub* the gentlest means ever invented of convicting us of our vices and weaknesses?

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 277.

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