

Read by
Robert Smith
To the Literary Club
Monday, 14 March 2005

The Irish Pimpernel

(With apologies to Baroness Orczy, author of "The Scarlet Pimpernel")

As a boy I walked down Dublin streets
Some shoddy and some grand
To the Museum, Ireland's greatest
No finer in the land
On mission bent, my mind made up
A Wood's halfpenny in my hand
Ireland's museum, home of hist'ry
Shrine of bygone Celtic mys'try
Priceless treasures, centuries old
Copper, silver, bronze and gold
The objects I loved most of all
Were rows of coins Large and small
With care I'd checked them
Eyed the lot
Thought I had one
They had not
Each coin mounted with the donor's name
I hoped with mine they'd do the same
Found the office, invited in
Kindly gent with friendly grin
My coin examined, wrote a bit
Said "Thank you, son"
And that was it
Have not seen it to this day
In some place it's stashed away
Once, coins like mine took center stage
In seventeen twenties, roused Ireland's rage
The Irish cried, "We're being used!
Tricked again, and abused!"
An open letter, fierce, emphatic

Began a battle, numismatic
Some lone, courageous, fearless fighter
An unknown, anonymous, myst'ry writer
Covering himself with glory
Provided me with this story

In the seventeen twenties Ireland's economy was in a perilous state. Even its stock of copper halfpenny coins was worn out and degraded. Ireland was then a separate part of the United Kingdom with her own parliament; she shared the same monarch and was rigidly subject to his rule. For its currency

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Ireland used English coins, produced by the Royal Mint. England decided to replace its halfpennies in Ireland. The Royal Mint, then under the direction of the scientist mathematician Sir Isaac Newton, produced the finest coins in Europe. The King, George the First, thought that the Mint's standards were too high for coins to be used in Ireland. Irish coins should be of a lower standard. The uncouth Irish would not notice the difference; so the Royal Mint was bypassed and the manufacture of Irish coins was put out to bid. In particular, the new specifications would allow a good profit to be made by the Royal Mint patent holder, His Majesty King George. Instead of weighing forty-six coins to the pound weight, according to Royal Mint standards, the new Irish coins would use less copper and weigh sixty to the pound. Behind the scenes. King George quietly arranged for the patent rights and profits to be passed on to his German mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, who recently had been making increasing demands on the royal purse. The Duchess sold her rights to the successful bidder, a Mr. William Wood, a prominent Wolverhampton metal manufacturer, for the sum of £10,000, worth over \$1.5 million dollars in to-day's currency. The news of these Royal shenanigans leaked to Ireland. The puppet Irish Parliament in Dublin was upset and protested.... mildly. It had not been consulted and it warned Westminster that Irish hotheads might see the inferior coinage as exploitation. Trade with England, on which Ireland greatly depended, might get choked off, since the coins were likely to be rejected by English merchants. Ireland would become filled with useless tokens. Protests were brushed aside and there the matter rested But not for long.

Much to London's surprise, a great upsurge of anti-British feeling spread throughout Ireland. There was even talk of rebellion. What on earth was going on? Why all this fuss over some miserable coins? And more to the point, who was behind a heinous public letter,

distributed far and wide, that was stirring up so much trouble? England's informers failed to come up with the answer.

The letter, signed "**M.B. Drapier**", had been sent to Ireland's tradesmen, shop-keepers, farmers and common folk. It was read out at public meetings and at country crossroads. It was written in powerful scathing terms, in precise clear English, a gem of political attack. Its message was unmistakably clear; "Ireland! Rid yourselves of foreign tyranny!" It thundered against England and its philandering king; its cruel methods of government; of corruption and greed of its shameless leaders, squeezing the Irish economy to inflate the coffers of the rich. It wrote about the spoils remitted to London to support lavish living in **Mayfair**; about the widespread nepotism that prevented the advancement of the native born; about the uncontrolled deforestation that devastated the countryside. Ireland was being crushed under the tyrant's heel. Never before had England's overseas policies been so savagely, or so eloquently, attacked.

Who was this Irish Pimpernel?
Who cried out "England, go roast in hell"
This writer was no wild yahoo
His arguments, so fierce and true,
Used his pen, just like a rapier
This "**demned**", elusive, Mr. **Drapier**

The coins were withdrawn. Mr. Wood was bought off with a generous pension and crates of Wood's halfpennies were shipped off to the American Colonies, where they remained in use for many years, apparently without complaint. Wood's halfpennies are still available on the internet as collector's pieces, for about \$300 each, at irishcoinage.com. "Mr. **Drapier**" sat before a log fire in the large dining hall of his Dublin mansion, finishing off a bottle of his favorite Alicante wine. He was alone, celebrating. His butler, his housekeeper and his coachman were all below in the kitchen and Stella, his love of many years, lived nearby in her own home with a devoted lady-companion. He had single-handedly won a great and rare victory for Ireland, giving it a fresh jump-start in its struggle for freedom. He was getting on in years; he was nearly sixty. He began writing his own obituary, in verse, which he would send to Stella. He trusted her. He knew he would be beyond the reach of the oppressor when it became public. He wrote of himself in the third person:

For 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, by one monarch led,
Had set a price upon his head;
But, not a traitor could be found,
To sell him for six hundred pound.

"[M.B.Drapier](#)" was hailed in Ireland as its greatest living patriot and is still venerated there as a national hero. Ironically, the so-called "[Mr. Drapier](#)", the great fighter for Irish freedom, was not a Catholic and did not even consider himself truly Irish. He was [Dr Jonathan Swift](#), Doctor of Divinity, graduate of Trinity College Dublin and Oxford University; the Anglican Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral; poet, political pamphleteer and perhaps literature's greatest satirist. Though a member of the Anglican Church and nominally a Tory, Swift's overwhelming pity for the hungry and persecuted Irish poor, and his fury over England's [heartlessness](#), outweighed any sense of loyalty he might have had for the English establishment. He was prepared to risk his life for the Irish underdog. Years later, Sir John [Mahaffy](#), a great wit and Oscar Wilde's tutor at Trinity, commenting on Swift's behavior, remarked that "Only in Ireland can such deviations from the normal occur, for it is a place where the probable never happens and the impossible always does". Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin in 1667. His father, aged 25, had died suddenly seven months before he was born. His mother, shortly after giving birth, returned to her family in England, leaving her infant son behind in Dublin, in the care of her late husband's wealthy brother as guardian. At the age of six, Jonathan was sent off to boarding school in Kilkenny. Kilkenny College, founded in 1538 and still flourishing as one of Ireland's premier boarding schools, is located in a beautiful rural setting about 50 miles south of Dublin.

I have very pleasant memories of visits to Kilkenny, to play [rugby](#) and cricket for [Wesley College](#), Kilkenny's arch-rival; a rivalry which continues to this day. We usually beat them at cricket but not at rugby, a much more physical game. I attribute their skill at rugby, to their being less gentlemanly. These [fine](#) games did not exist in Swift's day. Pity, it might have given some insight into Swift's personality and early character development. Swift entered Trinity in 1682 as most Kilkenny and Wesley graduates still do; Jonathan was fourteen, the usual age of university admission in those days. There did not seem to be any adult who cared much for him, or for whom he particularly cared. At Trinity he was an undisciplined student. He did well in English, but, because of unruly behavior, he obtained his degree only by "special grace", which was a polite way of saying that he just scraped through. Sir William Temple, an early Trinity Provost whose remains are buried in the College Chapel, was a distant kinsman; this might have helped. As we shall see, the Sir

William Temple of Swift's day was to play a major role in his life.

After graduation, while still trying to make up his mind about a career, war broke out, and **Jonathon** left Trinity for England in a hurry. The Dutch Protestant Prince William of Orange had replaced the Catholic English King, James II, who fled to France. Mary, James's daughter, reluctantly married William, in a politically arranged marriage, becoming his queen. The British Ambassador to Holland, the current Sir William Temple, was the key player in arranging the marriage, which allied England to powerful and rich Holland, a move that greatly strengthened England's role in Europe.

The deposed James gathered an army in France and invaded Ireland, in preparation for an attack on England. He used Trinity, a very English Protestant institution, as his main military barracks and stables for his cavalry.

Wasting no time, William's forces landed in Ireland and soundly beat James at the Battle of the **Boyne**, just north of Dublin. There was great slaughter of the Irish volunteers, who had sided with Catholic James. At the first sign of the battle turning against him, James, abandoning his troops, fled back to France. He is remembered in Ireland for this act of cowardice, as "**Seamus a Hacha**" Gaelic for "James the Shit". The anniversary of King **Billie's** victory is celebrated each year with great drum-beating parades in Northern Ireland, still creating much sectarian tension, frequently leading to violence.

After a brief visit to his mother, and with her encouragement, Swift successfully applied for a position as aide and secretary to the now retired Sir William Temple. Temple, friend of the new King, was still very powerful politically.

Swift accompanied Sir William on his visits to the Royal Court, where he met the King and leaders of the State and Church. To enter the swim of things, and on Sir William's advice, Swift took holy orders in the Anglican Church. The gauche young **Dubliner** quickly adapted to his new surroundings and got caught up in the swirling **religio-political** issues of the day.

There were two evenly balanced political parties at Westminster, the Whigs and the **Tories**. Both these terms have ancient and primitive origins. Whig has its origins in Scottish Gaelic, meaning a cattle or horse thief. Later the term referred to any rebellious group and became linked to Scottish **Presbyterianism** and a hatred of the divine right of kings. Tory originally was a term of abuse applied to Irish rebels, (which is hard to believe). During the Restoration, **Tories** became supporters of Charles II, and represented the aristocracy and landed gentry. Initially Swift was a Whig, but later switched to the Tories, because of their greater sympathy for the Anglican Church, of which he was now an aspiring junior

member.

Living as one of the family in the Temple home, Moor Park, drew Swift into the elegant way of life of the English wealthy upper classes. He participated in the many soirees at Moor Park, which Temple, a sophisticated **man-of-the-world** and polished intellectual, held for the leading political and literary leaders of the day.

Swift spent many hours in Temple's library, expanding his knowledge and endlessly writing. He wrote commentaries for Sir William with a unique blend of wit and satire as he observed and listened to the Moor Park discussions. Sir William recognized a whiff of genius in his young aide. Swift was making his mark not only on Sir William, but also on his influential visitors.

During this time Swift first met Esther **Johnson**, the young daughter of Temple's housekeeper. She was eight, he was twenty two. Sir William appointed him her tutor. Swift educated her, helped form her character and came to love her, with feelings he never knew as a child. This relationship endured throughout their lifetime. She became the "Stella" of his poetry and when they were apart he wrote to her daily. Esther preserved his letters and later published them as "Journal to Stella"; not only did it chronicle Swift's daily activities, thoughts and feelings; it also provides one of the most enlightened social records of life in those days. As in our own times, the press greatly influenced public opinion. Then, the most politically influential was a Tory weekly, "The Examiner". To stay in power the Tory government needed the support of moderate Whigs. The young Swift, though nominally a Tory, could not be pigeonholed politically, and appeared the ideal choice to become the Examiner's editor. He accepted. In his first editorial he caused some dismay in the Tory readership by assuring them that he "would be a dispassionate observer with no partisan views and would converse in equal freedom with the deserving men of both parties". He would not hesitate to criticize the establishment, should the need arise. His pieces were widely read and he was courted by leaders of both political parties. His rise was meteoric. He was on first name terms with members of the Cabinet and leading writers became friends. He was recognized as incorruptible and his pen was sharp. He became London's most popular political writer of the day. Swift felt that it was only a matter of time before he would achieve his goal of becoming an English bishop. He despised much of what he saw and heard in the London scene. As a bishop he would have power and would use this to benefit society as a whole. But the young upstart from Ireland, with his cool confidence and brilliant mind, underestimated how slow advancement could be for a relative outsider, in those gilded upper reaches of English society.

Then his political base suddenly collapsed; both Sir William and King William died. Anne, another daughter of "Seamus a Hacha", a dull and sickly person, inherited the Crown. She disliked Swift. He clearly stood out as a misfit among the sycophants that fawned on her daily. He was not to be trusted.

Restless and impatient with the superficialities that surrounded him, and irritated by the petty backbiting in that world of politics. Swift wrote;

So naturalists observe, a flea

Hath smaller fleas that on him prey,

And these have smaller fleas to bite 'em

And so proceed ad infinitum

Swift yearned for a more alive and challenging companionship. He felt stifled by the hateful snobbery and rigid protocol and jostling for power at Westminster. To provide this important missing part of his life, and with extraordinary judgment, he created a Literary Club. Gathering together a group of writer friends in the spring of 1714, he formed The Scriblerus or Scribblers Club, with the intent of improving society by ridiculing false learning and bad writing. At these club meetings, Swift developed his most trusted male friendships and generated some of his greatest literary ideas.

The Scribblers were a most distinguished lot. They included Joseph Addison, founder of the Spectator, one of the great masters of English prose; Sir Richard Steele, a Dubliner, founder of the Tatler, an influential essayist and Parliamentarian; the poet Alexander Pope, Swift's closest friend, remembered for his poem "The Rape of the Lock". Lesser known, but gifted, members included John Gay, dramatist, whom Swift helped write "The Beggar's Opera", a satire mocking the prevailing new fad in Italian opera; a form of entertainment Swift loathed. I was pleased to note that the medical profession was well represented in the Club by Dr. John Arbuthnot, Queen Anne's physician, who wrote political pamphlets, including a satire on England, "The History of John Bull". He created the character of John Bull, the personification of England, a stout, irascible, but on the whole a decent honest-to-goodness fellow.

Anne was in continuous poor health. She had three stillbirths, one infant died soon after birth, and ten miscarriages. Not surprisingly. Dr. Arbuthnot was almost always on call. Rooms at St. James Palace were placed at his disposal. Whenever he was on call, Club meetings were held at the Palace. When the Queen was having a good spell, the Club met at members' favorite taverns or chocolate houses.

Club meetings sounded great fun. As well as critiquing members' current literary efforts, there was eating, drinking, singing and especially light-hearted presentations in satirical and sometimes scatological doggerel. The food bill was picked up in turn. Members were carefully selected. All were male. Swift, as the leader of the Club, sent the following recruiting poem to Lord Oxford, who subsequently became Lord of the Treasury, the ancient title for prime minister, still used on occasion by Tony Blair. It ran as follows;

"Sent from the doctor's chambers at St. James, past eight.

The Doctor and Swift, Addison, Pope, and Gay

In manner most submissive most humbly do pray

That your Lordship would once let your cares all alone

And climb the dark stairs to your friends who have none:

To your friends who at least have no cares but to please you

To a good honest Junta that never will tease you".

There is no evidence that his Lordship joined. Perhaps he was too busy dealing with other more challenging juntas. He narrowly escaped an assassination attempt soon afterwards.

The Club remained active until Swift returned to Dublin, several years later. Swift's literary club friends remained faithful by correspondence to the end of his life or theirs. About that time Swift finished two books, work he had started as a student at Trinity, "A Tale of a Tub" and "The Battle of the Books". They dealt with corruption; the first with corruption in religion and the second with corruption in learning. They brought Swift immediate literary notoriety. The "Tub", dealing with religion, became a best seller and ran to five editions. Swift wrote it in fable form. Three brothers, Peter, Martin and John, recognizable as Roman Catholicism, the Anglican Church, and Presbyterianism, were each given a coat by God, their father. He gave them careful instructions on how to wear and take care of these garments. They had similarities, but there were clear differences in cut and style. Each coat represented an individual doctrine. Written by a recent entrant to the Anglican ministry, no prizes are given for guessing which of the sons was least badly behaved and least displeased their father. The public loved it. This was dangerous stuff for a young cleric and could have meant prison or worse for the author. Swift enjoyed his notoriety; he was unafraid, but he had dug himself a deep hole as far as Church advancement was concerned. As he rose in social prominence, there were many promises of preferment, but nothing important materialized. Finally he had to settle for a relatively minor post, the Deanship of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. There was one great

consolation in returning to the city of his birth. He had persuaded the highly intelligent Stella, and now a beautiful young lady, and her lifelong upper-class companion, Rebecca Dingley, to move to Dublin. Sir William had provided Stella with an inheritance and some property leases in Ireland. Rebecca, fifteen years older than Stella, a distant relative of the Temples, was also well-provided for; more later about Temple's wonderful generosity to Stella and his deep fatherly interest in Swift. According to Swift, Stella was a man's woman. She did not interrupt, or laugh at one's mistakes. To him, she was the most beautiful, graceful and agreeable woman he knew. Her hair was blacker than a raven's and every feature other face perfection. She was the most important person in his life and he in her's, and yet they never married. Whenever they met, Stella was always accompanied by Rebecca. Tomes have been written about their relationship. Whatever this may have been it appears to have suited them both. It withstood the passionate attachment to Swift by another Esther, Esther Van Hornrigh, referred to as "Vanessa" in his writings. This relationship developed during a lengthy period when Swift was in London, separated from Stella. He was at the peak of his social and political power, still trying for a bishopric. He was a much sought after dinner guest by the rich and famous. Apparently the ladies found him very attractive. He was frequently invited to the home of a wealthy Dutch family, the Van Hornrighs. Only passing reference was made to their daughter in his letters to Stella. When Swift returned to Dublin, much to his embarrassment, Vanessa followed him. She was unhappy and unwell, and, rightly or wrongly, felt discarded. She wrote to Stella asking outright if she was married to the Dean. It is not known what else she wrote. An outraged Stella sent the letter to the Dean and she and Rebecca left Dublin in high-dudgeon to stay with friends in the country. The Dean, in a towering rage, rode out to where Vanessa lodged, flung her letter at her feet and left without a word. This anecdote has been preserved in its full melodramatic vigor by the Victorian poet, Thomas Unwin, who described the scene;

She enters, springs to meet him. God!

Can passion demonize a brow

Of spirit-splendour! In a breath

The letter's thrown; and he, like death,

Is gone: Hark! Ringing from the road

His horse's trampling echoes now.

Upon which Vanessa supposedly drops dead on the spot, "Brain-

blasted by his silent scorn".

It is true that Vanessa died soon afterwards, but it is also known that she was seriously ill before the visit. Maurice James [Craig](#), considered one of Ireland's finest present-day essayists has commented, "Swift has been the occasion of more nonsense than any other writer except Shakespeare". Throughout his life Swift suffered from severe headaches and dizzy spells which, combined with his restlessness and drive, sounded awfully like severe migraine to me.

Brilliant, complex, Dublin born,
Church and State, between them torn
Headache plagued, with dizzy spells
Tormented by Cathedral bells
Called by many misanthrope
Of fellow men, just gave up hope
But closer look finds this untrue
His greatest works confound this view

Swift explained his view of mankind in a letter to his Club friend Pope. Man was not a rational animal but an animal only *capable* of reason. It tore his heart to witness the constant spectacle of creatures capable of reason, and therefore capable of reasonable conduct, refusing to live up to their capabilities. It was for this failure that he hated *humankind*, though he greatly loved many individuals, and particularly pitied the hungry Irish poor. He handed out money to beggars on Dublin streets. He was horrified by what he saw on the long dangerous horseback journeys to isolated Protestant parishes scattered throughout Ireland. He saw bands of wretched ragged unemployed men and women struggling to stay alive, with swarms of children, many naked, whom they could not support, living in mud cabins and speaking in a barbaric sounding language. Enraged, and in a controlled white heat of fury, he sat down and wrote, "A Modest Proposal", probably the most savage satire on a nation's rule.

He recommended, in serious academic vein, how to solve the Irish economic crisis and the widespread starvation in the countryside. He computed the number of children born each year, the impossibility of feeding and clothing them and the age at which they began stealing to survive. He proposed that at one year old an Irish babe would make a most delicious, nourishing and wholesome source of food. At the same time it would reduce the

numbers of the poor. His onslaught begins with regrets for having to bring such a dismal business to the attention of the cultivated minds of the rulers, in the tone of a scientist presenting a proposal to a learned society. Nothing would be wasted. The little carcasses would be skinned to provide delicate leather gloves for the ladies and light summer boots for the gentlemen. His proposal reminds us of a similar recent obscene "Final Solution" that took a government's unbelievable and venomous inhumanity to its horrible logical conclusion.

Now settled permanently in Dublin, his duties as Dean well under control, his beloved near at hand, he had come to terms with his disappointments and there was still much to be done. He had still to write his masterpiece.

It took him four years to write Gulliver's Travels. The novel included pieces he had tried out years before at the Scribbler's Club. Although filled with social and political allusions of his day, dealing with man's moral nature and the defective institutions mankind creates, the novel has valid meaning for our present times. Swift did not want it to be a treatise in academic prose. To be successful with the reading public, it would have to compete with the literary best-sellers of the day; Captain Cook's account of his voyages of discovery and Daniel Defoe's, just published enormously popular, Robinson **Crusoe**. It would be an adventure story for all ages, and for those prepared to ponder its deeper meanings and satirical allusions, it would inform as well as divert.

Gulliver, the narrator was a likeable, resourceful ship's surgeon, a reasonable example of humanity, to whom we can easily relate. He undertakes four voyages, all of which ended disastrously in remote places. First there was **Lilliput**, where he is a giant among tiny people. Then there was **Brobdingnag** where he is tiny among a land of giants. He expected the toy-like Lilliputians to be as charming as they looked; they turned out to be treacherous and cruel. He expected the giant **Brobdingnagians** to be brutes and monsters; they turned out to be enlightened and humane. Their country was a Utopia, reducing Gulliver, so proud of his own country England, to a resentful silence.

The third and fourth voyages are less memorable, though the third voyage to **Laputa** has an uncomfortable present-day ring to it. We find Gulliver, a castaway on a desert island, saved by the arrival of a flying island; the nearest thing Swift's imagination could conjure up as a **science-fiction-like** space-ship. He is taken on board where he finds everything is based on cold scientific principles. He is treated well but as a complete ignoramus; this was Swift's dig at the emerging belief, based on Newton's wonderful discoveries, that science alone could unravel the mysteries of life and eventually save mankind from all its sufferings. The great flying machine, operated by giant magnets and the power of gravity,

allowed the king on board to exercise his ruthless will over his dominions below. Gulliver writes; "If the crime deserve it, they are pelted from above with great stones, against which they have no defense but by creeping into cellars and caves, while the roofs of their houses are beaten to pieces. If they continue to be obstinate or offer to raise insurrections, the King has the power to precede to the last remedy, by letting the island drop **crushingly** down, making a universal destruction of the towns and their dwellers below". Gulliver consoles himself by believing that such a thing could never be perpetrated by any civilized nation. When I re-read the book recently, this made me squirm with guilt. Swift had little confidence that his writings would produce much change. In despair, as Mr. **Drapier**, the Irish Pimpernel, he wrote;

"With horror, grief, the Dean Beheld the dire
destructive scene" And then, "Perhaps I may
allow, the Dean Had too much satire in his vein
And seemed determined not to starve it Because
no age could more deserve it"

He unerringly asked;

"How is it possible to expect mankind to take advice
when they will not so much as take warning? "

and

"There is none so blind as those who do not wish to see"

He defined vision "As the art of seeing things invisible". And it was so for him, near the end of his days, when, in my opinion, he used his great vision to its **greatest** effect. While in London, Swift visited the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, known locally as Bedlam. Bedlam was open to the public for a small entrance fee. After a visit to see the lions at the zoo, he and some friends and their children visited Bedlam, a typical **18th** century mental institution, a human zoo. The unhappy and filthy patients, chained and caged, were on show to be marveled and laughed at and provoked into a frenzy by the more heartless. Swift was shocked and remained haunted by the memory until the end of his days.

On October 19th 1745 he died, leaving his entire estate, derived from royalties for his writings, for the founding of St. Patrick's Hospital for the Mentally Ill. He stipulated that the hospital must be free of the abuses he'd witnessed at Bedlam. It was one of the earliest

purpose-built mental hospitals in the world and the first such hospital in Ireland. It was built according to his detailed and painstaking instructions. From the start, shackles and cages were banned and the curious not admitted. Patients were kept clean, clothed, properly fed and, though their treatment was primitive by present-day standards, they were treated with compassion. I attended St. Patrick's Hospital as a Trinity medical student and was taught not to react with fear to the mentally ill, or to refer to them disparagingly as crazy or mad.

It took a visionary non-physician, 260 years ago, to open the public eye to the abuse of so many neglected mentally ill and to provide a safe haven for them. To-day thousands of patients continue to benefit from Swift's vision, compassion and generosity at St. Patrick's Hospital.

In 2000, Her Excellency President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, officially opened a new cute admission and special care unit at St. Patrick's and named it The Dean Swift Ward.

Epilogue

In the Cathedral
In peace, side by side
Lie Swift and his Stella
Was she his bride?
Rumors abound
Had they something to hide?
Swift and his Stella
By a love deeply tied
For some reason unknown
Their marriage denied
Both owed much to Sir William
Their protector and guide
Shared his wealth and position
As if each was his child
Jonathan and Stella
Half-brother? Half-sister?
The truth with them died
DNA
Could resolve this by testing
Let's leave them alone
Peacefully, resting.

In ending I wish to recognize Victoria [Glendinning](#) for her masterful biography of Jonathan Swift, which was an enormous help in preparing this paper; and also to recognize my late father, William Abraham Smith, who, long ago, aroused in me an interest in Swift, by giving me a Wood's halfpenny; and lastly to my wife, [Myfanwy](#), for her wonderful proof-reading skills.

Resources.

- "Jonathan Swift" by Victoria [Glendinning](#) (Random House, 1998)
- "Gulliver's Travels" by [Alien Klots Jr.](#) ([Dodd, Mead & Co.](#) 1950)
- "The Norton Anthology of English Literature" (Norton & Co. 1962. Copy in Literary Club Library)