

**LEISURE HOURS IN A  
COUNTRY PARSONAGE  
OR STRICTURES ON MEN,  
MANNERS, AND BOOKS**

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Leisure Hours in a Country Parsonage or Strictures on Men, Manners, and Books by John Keefe Robinson

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# LEISURE HOURS

IN A

## COUNTRY PARSONAGE;

OR,

### STRICTURES ON MEN, MANNERS, AND BOOKS.

BY THE

REV. JOHN KEEFE ROBINSON,

*Prebendary of Whitechurch, Diocese of Ferns,*

AUTHOR OF "EUPHRASOR: OR, CLERGY AND LAITY."

"Virtus, repulsae nescia sordida,  
Intaminata fulget honoribus,  
Nec sumit aut ponit securus  
Arbitrio popularis auro."—HOR.

"Undisappointed in designs,  
With native honours virtue shines,  
Nor takes up pow'r, nor lays it down,  
As giddy rabbles smile or frown."



DUBLIN

JAMES M<sup>c</sup>GLASHAN, 21 D'OLIER-STREET.

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## P R E F A C E .

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IN presenting this little work to the public, I do so, I acknowledge, with some hesitation. The opinions, which are here and there advanced, militate so strongly against many preconceived notions, that the person who advances them ought at least to use caution, and do nothing rashly. I thought, however, that I saw my way clearly before me; and being conscious of rectitude of intention, any intricacies or difficulties I might meet with, gave me then, as usual, very little concern.

My first object had been simply my own amusement; but, as I proceeded, I took so much pleasure in renewing my acquaintance with some of my old favourite books, that it occurred to me, if I could by any means infuse a love of old English authors into the readers of the present day, who are often not very classical in their taste, that I might do them some service, be it ever so little. I therefore adopted the plan of referring to our best writers, whenever I could, as I thought, appropriately, and of introducing quotations out of those worthies of bygone days, who formed the delight of many a college hour; and constitute, notwithstanding all the fluctuations of taste, and the perversions of fashion, the real strength and glory of our English literature.

My next hope was, to convey, through this medium, which I conceived would be removed from the formality of a lecture, some sober and important truths, which probably might not gain access so readily, if delivered in a more didactic form. The subject-matter of my title-page is exhaustless, and the prelibation, which is here offered, will be excused, it is hoped, if for no other reason, yet perhaps for its brevity. I have no doubt that many of my views and opinions will be condemned, on account of their contrariety to a certain set of modes and fashions of the present day; yet I humbly conceive, that they are in no degree the worse on that account, believing, as I do, that those fashions are opposed, in too many instances, both to Christianity and to right reason. At the same time, there are points, on which I have expressed my opinion with diffidence; and if I am wrong, I have only to submit with patience to the imputation of error.

On the subject I have chosen, it would be impossible to write, so as not to have the appearance at least, if persons are resolved to have it so, of *individual* applicability. This, however, is an unreasonable proceeding, for no stricture that was ever yet written, or sermon that was preached, might not be so strained, if the conscience of the hearer or reader were so stung, or his vanity so wounded, as to single himself out for the intended mark. It is strange, that persons should be weak enough to adopt this tormenting kind of self-appropriation, instead of being content with the safe and dignified philosophy of the poet—

“ Let the gall'd jade wince, our withers are unwrung.”

Yet so it has been in the vanity of man, and so it will be, I suppose, to the very last—

“ They take offence, who have not been offended.”

When the “ Tatler ” and “ Spectator ” first exhibited the characters and manners of the age, there was a general consternation felt on the daily publication ; and in this case, it appears, not without some reason, as we are told by Dr. Johnson, that “ the personages introduced in these papers, were not merely ideal : they were then known, and conspicuous in various stations,” and “ of those portraits which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished, and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known, and partly forgotten.” It does not appear, however, that those who were so described had the folly to discover their sense of soreness, but prudently kept their feelings to themselves. Not so in the following anecdote, where it seems the complainant did not gain much by his motion.

Few things are better known to the lovers of poetry than Pope’s “ Imitations of Horace.” In one of these poems is a couplet, to which the story relates :—

“ Slander or poison dread from Delia’s rage,  
Hard words, or hanging, if your judge be \* \* \*.”

Sir Francis Page, a judge well known in his time, conceiving that his name was meant to fill up the blank, sent his clerk to Mr. Pope, to complain of the insult. Pope told the young man that the blank might be supplied by many monosyllables, other than the judge’s name : “ But, sir,” said the clerk, “ the judge says that no other word will make sense of the passage.” “ So,