In 1688 Swift quitted the university, and, after a brief residence with his mother at Leicester, entered the family of Sir William Temple at Moor Park, near Farnham, as he declares for the advantage of Temple’s conversation, but at least partly as an amanuensis. A distant relationship between his mother and Lady Temple appears to have recommended him to this post, which he found trying to his pride and independence. Temple was, as Swift ad­mitted, “a man of sense and virtue,” but his temper was exclusive, his manners formal, and he had retired from public affairs from self-regard and over-fastidiousness. If he solaced his voluntary ostracism by a comparison with the elegant retirement and lettered ease of Cicero, it did not therefore occur to him to compare his obscure Irish secretary with the Roman orator’s amanuensis Tiro, who had, at least, invented shorthand. We, who know that in the patron’s place the dependant would have governed the nation, need not be surprised at finding, full twenty years afterwards, the iron of servitude still rankling in the latter’s haughty soul. He withdrew from Temple’s service on a pretext of ill health from May 1690 to August 1691, but returned, and undoubtedly made himself useful to his employer, who on one occasion rendered him the medium of a confidential communication to King William, who had consulted Temple on the bill for triennial parliaments, then sanctioned by both branches of the legislature. Swift did his best to enforce Temple’s arguments in favour of the measure, and was in after life wont to refer to the failure of his rhetoric as the most useful lesson his vanity had ever received. Struck, it would seem, rather by the physical than the mental endowments of the robust young Irishman, William offered him a troop of horse, a proposal which appears to have been subsequently commuted into a promise of church preferment. Swift had already (July 1692) proceeded to the degree of M.A. at Oxford, and the execution of his design to embrace the ecclesiastical pro­fession was hastened by a quarrel with Temple, occasioned by the latter’s reluctance to contract any definite engage­ment to provide for him. Throwing up his employment, he passed (May 1694) over into Ireland, but found his views impeded by the refusal of all the bishops to ordain him without some certificate of the regularity of his deport­ment while in Temple’s family. Five months passed ere he could bring himself to solicit this favour from his old patron, which he ultimately did in a letter submissive in appearance, but charged to the full with smothered rage and intense humiliation. Forgiveness was easy to one in Temple’s place and of Temple’s disposition, and he not only despatched the requisite testimonials, but added a recommendation which obtained for Swift the living of Kilroot, in the diocese of Down and Connor (January 1695). His residence here was not fated to be of long duration. Temple, who knew his value and had not parted with him willingly, soon let him understand that a return was open to him, and Swift, whose resentment was cooled by time, and soothed by the acknowledgment of his value to his patron, readily complied (May 1696). He continued to reside with Sir William till the latter’s death in January 1699. No further disagreement troubled their intimacy, and Temple bequeathed Swift the charge of editing his writings, a laborious but not an unprofitable commission.

Macaulay has justly indicated the familiarity with public affairs acquired by Swift at Moor Park as one main cause of his subsequent distinction as a politician, and here too he laid the foundation of his literary renown. He is reported to have read regularly for eight hours every day; and we have his own authority for his having, as early as 1691, “written and burned, and written again, more on all manner of subjects than perhaps any man in England.” The only relics of these early days, however, belong to a

species of composition in which he was little qualified to excel. He has, indeed, a name among the poets of Eng­land, but the merit of his verse is usually in the ratio of its approach to the *sermo pedestris.* Mistaking the nature of his powers, he must needs begin with Pindarics, and the result may be imagined. Yet his own simple account of his feelings while endeavouring composition proves that the mood was right though the channel was wrong, and that there was error as well as truth in his kinsman Dryden’s severe and unforgiven remark, “ Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet.” Swift’s first prose composi­tion betrayed his resentment. In the *Battle of the Books* (1697), a satirical contribution to the controversy on the comparative merits of the ancients and the moderns raised by Perrault, but with especial reference to the question of the genuineness of the letters of Phalaris, on which his patron Temple had taken the wrong side, Swift for the first and last time committed a plagiarism, and sought to conceal it by an untruth. It is undoubtedly adapted, though certainly improved from, De Callières’s *Histoire Poétique de la Guerre nouvellement déclarée entre les An­ciens et les Modernes.* Here also his sarcasm for the first and last time recoiled upon himself. The satire against Dryden and Bentley wants, indeed, nothing but truth to be excellent; but the pictures of the former in his monstrous helmet aud the latter in his patchwork mail yield in ludicrousness to the idea of the author of the *Pindaric Odes* presuming to ridicule the author of *Absalom and Achito­phel,* and the inglorious student of Trinity College, Dublin, challenging the first philologist of the age on a question of classical scholarship. It is, however, to his credit that his learning was greater than that of the other writers on his side and his pretensions less. Swift’s next literary labour was his edition of Temple’s posthumous works, already mentioned. They appeared with a dedication to King William, which was to have made the editor a prebendary. A petition to this effect miscarried, as he always believed, through the negligence or ill-will of the nobleman who undertook to present it. Be this as it may, he had become too important to be overlooked, and soon obtained the post of secretary and chaplain to Earl Berkeley, one of the lords justices of Ireland. The better half of this appointment, however, escaped him on his arrival in that country, his secretaryship being transferred to a Mr Bushe, who, when Lord Berkeley had at length an opportunity of recompensing Swift’s disappointment by the gift of the deanery of Derry, successfully exerted his influence in favour of another clergyman, who is asserted to have gained his interest by the judicious outlay of a thousand pounds. With bitter indignation Swift threw up his chaplaincy, but was ultimately reconciled to his patron by the presentation to the rectory of Agher, in Meath, with the united vicarages of Laracor and Rathbeggan. For the first time in his life he might now call himself his own master, and had an opportunity of exhibiting, free from suspicion of external constraint, that stern regard to duty which was not the least prominent feature of his character. In an age of general laxity—in a priest of an alien church, whose most energetic servants commonly succumbed to the mortifying conviction of their uselessness and the detesta­tion they excited among the people for whom they laboured, the parishioners of Laracor found a clergyman whom they might have heard three times a week. The energy, however, which probably gained the respect, certainly failed to influence the convictions, of his Catholic flock. We have his own authority for reckoning his average congregation at “half a score”; and on one occasion his clerk Roger was his only auditor. In fact, his exertions in the pulpit were more meritorious than his achievements ; he entirely lacked the fire, the self-oblivion, the expansive