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Miscellaneous works Of The Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl Of Chesterfield

Consisting Of Letters to his Friends, never before printed, And Various
Other Articles

**Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope of
Dublin, 1777**

XVII. Common Sense. Saturday, March 4, 1738. N° 57.

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to bear the expence, and known not to grudge it, give the first blow to this extravagant folly; let them avow their own natural taste, for nature is in every thing plain and simple, and gratify it decently, at a frugal and wholesome table, instead of purchasing stupidity and distempers at the expence of their time and their estates. And they may depend upon it, that a fashion so convenient, as to the fortunes and the constitutions of their fellow subjects, will chearfully be followed, and universally prevail, to the great advantage of the public.

 XVII.

COMMON SENSE.

SATURDAY, March 4, 1738.

N^o 57.

I TOOK my leave some time ago of the daily silly Gazetteers, and promised to take no further notice of them; but then I only promised that impunity to their folly and absurdity. Now, whether they understood that amnesty to extend farther than I meant it, or whether, with the last three or four shillings paid them by Pounce with a P, they likewise received orders to be saucy and impertinent, I cannot tell; but be that as it will, they have of late been so impudently personal upon one worthy gentleman*, that I cannot help stepping a little out of my way to give them a kick: nor is this the greatest provocation they have given me; for, notwithstanding the regard I have for the character of that young gentleman, with whom they are so free, I am more incensed against them for disturbing the ashes of the dead, and for presuming, as they do, to touch Cicero with their impure and unhallowed hands. I therefore begin, by absolutely forbidding them even to mention,

* Mr. afterwards lord Lyttleton, who had been most grossly abused, both in doggrel verse, and in dull prose, by the authors of the Gazetteer.

tion, directly or indirectly, the name of Cicero, till they have first read and understood him in the original; which, as I take it, amounts to a perpetual prohibition.

I have so much charity for the poor devils, as to believe they would not write at all, if they could help it, and that they would write better if they could. I never looked upon their daily labors as voluntary, but considered them as the productions of heads and stomachs equally empty, and I really took in their papers out of charity, for, as to any other use I make of them, I might be supplied cheaper; but I must tell them that, if they grow personally scurrilous, I shall withdraw my charity, and common sense shall pursue them, though indeed I fear it will never overtake them.

By what I can understand of their papers, they seem to have a great dislike to a certain young gentleman, whom they have sometimes almost called by his own name, and of late by a hard Latin name. I confess it is very natural they should dislike him, nor am I in the least surprized that he should be the object of their satire, when I consider the useful subjects of their panegyrics; but then I must intimate to them, that they proceed very injudiciously, and do him a service which they little intended. Would they hurt him, they should commend him, for they are very sure that nobody will take their words for any thing; but when such wretched advocates, and profligate panegyrist of corruption, oppression, fraud, and all political immorality, direct their satire at one man, it is marking him out to the public, as a person eminently distinguished by all the opposites of those vices. The execution too of their design is as injudicious, as the design itself. They, somewhere or other, had an imperfect account of one Cicero, who had no mind that one Cæcilius, a young man, should be the prosecutor of one Verres, an old rogue, and that this same Cicero had told this Cæcilius, that he was too vain and enterprizing for so young a man, and wholly unequal to the task he undertook. This they thought was a pure scrap of history for them, and resolved to apply it immediately, when behold the misfortune that always attends ignorance and presumption! all the particular circumstances of that affair made against them, and suggested ugly applications elsewhere. When I saw that they made this
young

young gentleman, Cæcilius, I was really afraid for them, and went on with impatience to see who they would make Verres: but I perceived they had prudently avoided this danger, and wisely, as they thought, dubbed their patron Hortensius, who being a great lover of pictures and statues, was bribed by a sphynx of curious workmanship and of inestimable value, to appear as the advocate of the most flagitious fellow, and the most infamous cause that Rome ever knew. He prostituted his eloquence to the defence of peculation and corruption, and, by skreening the most infamous of men, became little less so himself. This circumstance is an unlucky one; I leave it with them to consider of.

As to their Cæcilius himself, it is well known to every body but them, that he was a sham prosecutor, set on by Verres himself to prevent a real one. He had been a sharer both of his plunder and of his guilt, and, upon a pretended concerted quarrel between them, offered himself as the properest person to prosecute this affair; but Cicero, who was in earnest, and determined that justice should be done upon so notorious an offender, discovered and defeated this stratagem, obtained the management of the cause, pushed it with vigor and abilities, and got the criminal condemned. Was the character of Cæcilius really applicable to this young gentleman, were there any hopes that he could ever be brought to skreen the most notorious corruption, I dare say, he would meet with the approbation, instead of the censure, of this virtuous society; and I am apt to think, that it is his unlikeness to Cæcilius, and his resemblance to Tully, which have drawn their indignation upon him.

A late very ingenious author has most judiciously observed, in his incomparable and short essay towards a character, &c. that pictures ought to be like the persons they are drawn for, nay so like, as to be known by their acquaintance: but these wretched rogues are conscious they are such bad painters, that, under the signs they daub, they always write the name. It is sometimes a certain young gentleman, who is tall and lean, at other times it is one, who was cofferer about seventeen years ago; and indeed if it was not for these helps, I, who am their only reader, should be at a great loss to know whom they mean.

I have

I have often wondered what sort of fellows this ingenious society was composed of; for, that their paper is a mosaic work of folly is evident, and I imagine it consists of a parcel of poor devils, who have either failed in their several trades, or who had never parts enough to be bound out, assisted sometimes by what they call *an able hand*, such as a mungrel lawyer, a tattered reverend, or a facetious clerk of an office, who, by sending them a paper now and then, get them a holiday from their daily drudgery; and here I cannot help condoling with them for the irreparable loss they have lately sustained, by the untimely and violent death of Mr. Carr*, who, I am told, was reckoned their top hand: so far is certain, that the under sheriff, to whom that unhappy author gave his papers, was so struck with the similitude of style between them and the Daily Gazetteers, that he was heard to say, however justly Mr. Carr might have suffered, the administration would still have a great loss of him.

As to those of his fraternity, who still survive and write, I have no more time to lose upon them, than just to say, that when they answer this, if they are ordered so to do, I absolutely bar their supposing it to be written by the gentleman himself, whom it is designed to vindicate. This they have often practised, and seem to think it very cunning, whereas it cannot possibly pass on any mortal; for there is not, certainly, more than one man in the kingdom, whose condition is so bad, that he could not find a friend to write in defence of him, when attacked, without being paid for it.

Having said thus much to these miserable journeymen, whom the world and I equally despise, I will just drop one word to their paymaster, whoever he may be; which is, that if he either encourages or suffers these scurrilities upon the private concerns and characters of others, who have always scorned to attack him out of his public character, let him strictly examine himself, and his own circumstances, and consider whether ample returns may not be made him by better pens, and with more truth, than ever were or will be employed on his side.

XVIII. COM-

* He was an attorney, and was concerned in a considerable robbery, for which he was tried, cast, and executed.