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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**

XXIV. The World. Thursday, June 14, 1753. N° 24.

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My correspondent has said enough to caution English gentlemen against carrying their wives and daughters to Paris; but I shall add a few words of my own, to dissuade the ladies themselves from any inclination to such a vagary. In the first place, I assure them, that of all French ragouts there is none, to which an Englishman has so little appetite, as an English lady served up to him *à la Française*. Next I beg leave to inform them, that the French taste in beauty is so different from ours, that a pretty English woman at Paris, instead of meeting with that admiration which her vanity hopes for, is considered only as a handsome corpse; and if, to put a little life into her, some of her compassionate friends there should persuade her to lay on a great deal of *rouge*, in English called paint, she must continue to wear it to extreme old age; unless she prefers a spot of real yellow, the certain consequence of paint, to an artificial one of red. And lastly, I propose it to their consideration, whether the delicacy of an English lady's mind may not partake of the nature of some high flavoured wines, which will not admit of being carried abroad, though under right management, they are admirable at home.

 XXIV.

THE WORLD.

THURSDAY, June 14, 1753.

 N^o 24.

I SHALL not at present enter into the great question between the antients and the moderns; much less shall I presume to decide upon a point of that importance, which has been the subject of debate among the learned from the days of Horace down to ours. To make my court to the learned, I will lament the gradual decay of human nature, for these last sixteen centuries; but at the same time I will do justice to my contemporaries, and give them

them their due share of praise, where they have either struck out new inventions, or improved, and brought old ones to perfection. Some of them I shall now mention.

The most zealous and partial advocate for the antients will not, I believe, pretend to dispute the infinite superiority of the moderns in the art of healing. Hippocrates, Celsus, and Galen, had no specifics. They rather endeavour to relieve, than pretend to cure. As for the astonishing cures of Æsculapius, I do not put them into the account; they are to be ascribed to his power, not to his skill: he was a god, and divinity was his *NOSTRUM*. But how prodigiously have my ingenious contemporaries extended the bounds of medicine! What nostrums, what specifics, have they not discovered! Collectively considered, they insure not only perfect health, but, by a necessary consequence, immortality; insomuch that I am astonished, when I still read in the weekly bills the great number of people, who chuse to die of such and such distempers, for every one of which there are infallible and specific cures, not only advertised but attested in all the news-papers.

When the lower sort of Irish, in the most uncivilized parts of Ireland, attend the funeral of a deceased friend or neighbour, before they give the last parting howl, they expostulate with the dead body, and reproach him with having died, notwithstanding that he had an excellent wife, a milch cow, seven fine children, and a competency of potatoes. Now though all these, particularly the excellent wife, are very good things in a state of perfect health, they cannot, as I apprehend, be looked upon as preventive either of sickness or of death; but with how much more reason may we expostulate with, and censure, those of our contemporaries, who, either from obstinacy or incredulity, die in this great metropolis, or indeed in this kingdom, when they may prevent or cure, at a trifling expence, not only all distempers, but even old age and death itself! The *RENOVATING ELIXIR* *infallibly restores pristine youth and vigor, be the patient ever so old and decayed,* and that without loss of time or business; whereas the same operation among the antients was both tedious and painful, as it required a thorough boiling of the patient.

The most inflammatory and intrepid fevers fly at the first discharge of Dr. James's powder, and a drop or pill of

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of the celebrated Mr. Ward, corrects all the malignity of Pandora's box.

Ought not every man of great birth and estate, who for many years has been afflicted with the *POSTEROMANIA*, or rage of having posterity, a distemper very common among persons of that sort, ought he not, I say, to be ashamed of having no issue made to perpetuate his illustrious name and title, when, for so small a sum as three-and-six-pence, he and his lady might be supplied with a sufficient quantity of the *VIVIFYING DROPS*, which infallibly cure imbecillity in men, and barrenness in women, though of ever so long standing?

Another very great discovery of the moderns, in the art of healing, is the infallible cure of the king's evil, though ever so inveterate, by only the touch of a lawful king, the right heir of Adam; for that is essentially necessary. The antients were unacquainted with this inestimable secret, and even Solomon the son of David, the wisest of kings, knew nothing of the matter. But our British Solomon, king James the first, a son of David also, was no stranger to it, and practised it with success. This fact is sufficiently proved by experience; but if it wanted any corroborating testimony, we have that of the ingenious Mr. Carte, who, in his incomparable history of England, asserts, and that in a marginal note too*, which is always more material than the text, that he knew *SOMEBODY*, who was radically cured of a most obstinate king's evil, by the touch of *SOMEBODY*. As our sagacious historian does not even intimate that this *SOMEBODY* took any thing of the other *SOMEBODY* for the cure, it were to be wished that he had named this *SOMEBODY*, and his place of abode, "for the benefit of the "poor †," who are now reduced, and at some expence, to have recourse to Mr. Vickers the clergyman. Besides I fairly confess myself to be personally interested in this enquiry, since this *SOMEBODY* must necessarily be the right heir of Adam, and consequently I must have the honor of being related to him.

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* This unlucky note (which Mr. Carte was over-persuaded by some of his friends to insert) eventually destroyed the credit of a history of which great expectations had been formed.

† Thus the great dean of St. Patrick's gave the world a singular satire, in 1713, under the title of "Mr. Collins's discourse of free-thinking; put into English, by way of abstract, for the use of the poor."

Our laborious neighbours and kinsmen, the Germans, are not without their inventions and happy discoveries in the art of medicine; for they laugh at a wound through the heart, if they can but apply their powder of sympathy—not to the wound itself, but to the sword or bullet that made it.

Having now, at least in my own opinion, fully proved the superiority of the moderns over the antients in the art of healing, I shall proceed to some other particulars, in which my cotemporaries will as justly claim, and I hope be allowed, the preference.

The ingenious Mr. Warburton, in his *divine legation of Moses*, very justly observes, that hieroglyphics were the beginning of letters, but at the same time he very candidly allows, that it was a very troublesome and uncertain method of communicating one's ideas; as it depended in a great measure on the writer's skill in drawing, an art little known in those days, and as a stroke too much or too little, too high or too low, might be of the most dangerous consequence, in religion, business, or love. Cadmus removed this difficulty by his invention of unequivocal letters, but then he removed it too much; for these letters or marks, being the same throughout, and fixed alphabetically, soon became generally known, and prevented that secrecy, which in many cases was to be wished for. This inconvenience suggested to the antients the invention of cryptography and steganography, or a mysterious and unintelligible way of writing, by the help of which none but corresponding parties, who had the key, could decypher the matter. But human industry soon refined upon this too; the art of decyphering was discovered, and the skill of the decypherer baffled all the labor of the cypherer. The secrecy of all literary correspondence became precarious, and neither business nor love could any longer be safely trusted to paper. Such for a considerable time was the unhappy state of letters, till the *BEAU MONDE*, an inventive race of people, found out a new kind of cryptography, or steganography, unknown to the antients, and free from some of their inconveniencies. Lovers in general made use of it, controversial writers commonly, and ministers of state sometimes, in the most important dispatches. It was writing in such an unintelligible manner, and with such obscurity, that the corresponding parties

themselves neither understood, nor even guessed at, each other's meaning; which was a most effectual security against all the accidents, to which letters are liable by being either mislaid or intercepted. But this method too, though long pursued, was also attended with some inconveniencies. It frequently produced mistakes, by scattering false lights upon that friendly darkness, so propitious to business and love. But our inventive neighbours, the French, have very lately removed all these inconveniencies, by a happy discovery of a new kind of paper, as pleasing to the eye, and as conducive to the dispatch, the clearness, and at the same time the secrecy, of all literary correspondence. My worthy friend Mr. Dodsley lately brought me a sample of it, upon which, if I mistake not, he will make very considerable improvements, as my countrymen often do upon the inventions of other nations. This sheet of paper I conjectured to be the ground-work and principal material of a tender and passionate letter from a fine gentleman to a fine lady; though in truth it might very well be the whole letter itself. At the top of the first page, was delineated a lady, with very red cheeks and a very large hoop, in the fashionable attitude of knotting, and of making a very genteel French curtesy. This evidently appears to stand for MADAM, and saves the time and trouble of writing it. At the bottom of the third page, was painted a very fine well-dressed gentleman, with his hat under his left arm, and his right hand upon his heart, bowing most respectfully low; which single figure, by an admirable piece of brachygraphy or short-hand, plainly conveys this deep sense, and stands instead of these many words, "I have the honor to be, with the tenderest and warmest sentiments, madam, your most inviolably attached, faithful humble servant." The margin of the paper, which was about half an inch broad, was very properly decorated with all the emblems of triumphant beauty and tender suffering passions. Groups of lillies, roses, pearls, corals, suns, and stars, were intermixed with chains, bearded shafts, and bleeding hearts. Such a sheet of paper, I confess, seems to me to be a compleat letter; and I would advise all fine gentlemen, whose time I know is precious, to avail themselves of this admirable invention: it will save them a great deal of time, and perhaps
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some thought, and I cannot help thinking, that, were they even to take the trouble of filling up the paper with the tenderest sentiments of their hearts, or the most shining flights of their fancy, they would add no energy or delicacy to those types and symbols of the lady's conquest, and their own captivity and sufferings.

These blank letters, if I may call them so, when they convey so much, will mock the jealous curiosity of husbands and fathers, who will in vain hold them to the fire to elicit the supposed juice of lemon, and upon whom they may afterwards pass for a piece of innocent pleasantry.

The dullest of my readers must, I am sure, by this time be aware, that the utility of this invention extends, *mutatis mutandis*, to whatever can be the subject of letters, and with much less trouble, and much more secrecy, propriety and elegance, than the old way of writing.

A painter of but modern skill and fancy may, in a very short time, have reams of ready-painted paper by him, to supply the demands of the statesman, the divine, and the lover. And I think it my duty to inform the public, that my good friend Mr. Doddsley, who has long complained of the decay of trade, and who loves, with a prudent regard to his own interest, to encourage every useful invention, is at this time learning to paint with most unwearied diligence and application: and I make no doubt, but that, in a very little time, he will be able to furnish all sorts of persons with the very best ready-made goods of that kind. I warned him indeed against providing any for the two learned professions of the law and physic, which I apprehend would lie upon his hands: one of them being already in possession, to speak in their own style, of a more brachygraphical, cryptographical, and steganographical secret, in writing their WARRANTS; and the other not willingly admitting brevity in any shape. Otherwise, what innumerable skins of parchment and lines of writing might be saved in a marriage-settlement, for instance, if the first fourteen or fifteen sons, the supposed future issue, LAWFULLY TO BE BEGOTTEN of that happy marriage, and upon whom the settlement is successively made, were to be painted every one a size less than the other upon one skin of parchment, instead of being enumerated upon one hundred, according to priority

of birth and seniority of age; and moreover the elder, by an happy *pleonasmus*, always to take before, and be preferred to, the younger! but this useful alteration is more to be wished than expected, for reasons which I do not at present think proper to mention.

I am sensible that the government may possibly object, that I am suggesting to its enemies a method of carrying on their treasonable correspondences, with much more secrecy than formerly. But, as my intentions are honest, I should be very sorry to have my loyalty suspected; and when I consider the zeal, and at the same time the ingenuity, of the Jacobites, I am convinced that their letters in this new method will be so charged with groves of oaken boughs, white roses and thistles interwoven, that their meaning will not be obscure, and consequently no danger will arise to the government from this new and excellent invention.

 XXV.

THE WORLD.

THURSDAY, June 21, 1753.

N° 25.

I HAVE the pleasure of informing my fair correspondent, that her petition contained in the following letter is granted. I wish I could as easily restore to her what she has lost. But to a mind like hers, so elevated! so harmonized! time and the consciousness of so much purity of intention will bring relief. It must always afford her matter of the most pleasing reflection, that her soul had no participation with her material part in that particular act, which she appears to mention with so tender regret. But it is not my intention to anticipate her story, by endeavouring to console her. Her letter, I hope, will caution all young ladies of equal virtue with herself against
that