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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**

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XXX.

T H E W O R L D .

SATURDAY, Oct. 3, 1754. N^o 92.

THE entertainment, I do not say the diversion, which I mentioned in my last paper, tumbled my imagination to such a degree, and suggested such a variety of indistinct ideas to my mind, that, notwithstanding all the pains I took to sort and digest, I could not reduce, them to method. I shall therefore throw them out in this paper without order, and just as they occurred to me.

When I considered that, perhaps, two millions of my fellow-subjects passed two parts in three of their lives in the very same manner, in which the worthy members of my friend's club pass theirs, I was at a loss to discover that attractive, irresistible, and invisible charm, for I confess I saw none, to which they so deliberately and assiduously sacrificed their time, their health, and their reason; till, dipping accidentally into monsieur Pascal, I read, upon the subject of hunting, the following passage. "What, unless to drown thought," says that excellent writer, "can make men throw away so much time upon a silly animal, which they may buy much cheaper in the market? It hinders us from looking into ourselves, which is a view we cannot bear." That this is often one motive, and sometimes the only one, of hunting, I can easily believe. But then it must be allowed too, that if the jolly sportsman, who thus vigorously runs away from himself, does not break his neck in his flight, he improves his health, at least, by his exercise. But what other motive can possibly be assigned for the soaker's daily and seriously swallowing his own destruction, except that of "drowning thought, and hindering him from looking into himself, which is a view he cannot bear?"

Unhappy the man who cannot willingly and frequently converse with himself; but miserable in the highest degree is the man who dares not! In one of these predicaments must

must that man be, who soaks and sleeps away his whole life. Either tired of himself for want of any reflections at all, or dreading himself for fear of the most tormenting ones, he flies for refuge from his folly or his guilt, to the company of his fellow-sufferers, and to the intoxication of strong liquors.

Archbishop Tillotson asserts, and very truly, that no man can plead, in defence of swearing, that he was born of a swearing constitution. I believe the same thing may with equal truth be affirmed of drinking. No man is born a drinker. Drinking is an acquired, not a natural, vice. The child, when he first tastes strong liquors, rejects them with evident signs of disgust, but is insensibly brought first to bear, and then perhaps to like, them, by the folly of his parents, who promise them as an encouragement, and give them as a reward.

When the coroner's inquest examines the body of one of those unhappy wretches, who drown themselves in a pond or river, with commonly a provision of lead in their pockets to make the work the surer, the verdict is either *felo de se*, or lunatic. Is it then the water, or the suddenness of the plunge, that constitutes either the madness or the guilt of the act? is there any difference between a water and a wine suicide? If there be, it is evidently in favour of the former, which is never so deliberate and premeditated as the latter. The soaker jogs on with a gentler pace indeed, but to as sure and certain destruction, and as a proof of his intention, would, I believe, upon examination, be generally found to have a good deal of lead about him too. He cannot alledge in his defence, that he has not warning, since he daily sees, in the chronic distempers of all his fellow soakers, the fatal effects of that slow poison which he so greedily guzzles; for I defy all those honest gentlemen, that is, all the hard drinkers in England, a numerous body I doubt, to produce one single instance of a soaker, whose health and faculties are not visibly impaired by drinking. Some indeed, born much stronger than others, hold it out longer, and are absurdly quoted as living proofs even of the salutary effects of drinking; but though they have not yet any of the *mc.* distinguished characteristics of their profession about them, though they have not yet lost one half of themselves by a *hemiplegia*, nor the use of all their limbs by the gout,

gout,

gout, though they are but moderately mangy, and though the impending dropfy may not yet appear, I will venture to affirm that the health they boast of is at best but an aukward state between sickness and health: if they are not actually sick, they are not actively well, and you will always find some complaint or other, inadvertently dropped from the triumphant soaker, within half an hour after he has assured you that he is *neither sick nor sorry*. My wife, who is a little superstitious, and perhaps too apt to point out and interpret judgments, otherwise an excellent woman, firmly believes, that the dropfy, of which most soakers finally die, is a manifest and just judgment upon them; the wine they so much loved being turned into water, and themselves drowned at last in the element they so much abhorred.

A rational and sober man, invited by the wit and gaiety of good company, and hurried away by an uncommon flow of spirits, may happen to drink too much, and perhaps accidentally to get drunk; but then these sallies will be short, and not frequent, whereas the soaker is an utter stranger to wit and mirth, and no friend to either.

His business is serious, and he applies himself seriously to it; he steadily pursues the numbing, stupifying, and petrifying, not the animating and exhilarating, qualities of the wine. Gallons of the Nepenthé would be lost upon him. The more he drinks the duller he grows; his politics become more obscure, and his narratives more tedious and less intelligible; till at last *maudlin*, he employs what little articulation he has left, in relating his doleful tale to an insensible audience. I fear my countrymen have been too long noted for this manner of drinking, since a very old and eminent French historian *, speaking of the English, who were then in possession of Aquitain, the promised land of claret, says, *Ils se saoulerent grandement, et se divertirent moult tristement à la mode de leur país*.

A very skilful surgeon of my acquaintance assured me, that, having opened the body of a *SOAKER*, who died of an apoplexy, he had found all the finer tubes and vessels plugged up with the tartar of the wine he had swallowed, so as to render the circulation of the blood absolutely impossible, and the folds of the stomach so stiffened with

it,

* Froissard.

it, that it could not perform its functions. He compared the body of the deceased to a siphon, so choaked up with the tartar and dregs of the wine that had run through it, as to be impervious. I adopted this image, which seemed to me a just one, and I shall for the future typify the SOAKER by the siphon, suction being equally the business of both.

An object, viewed at once, and in its full extent, will sometimes strike the mind, when the several parts and gradations of it, separately seen, would be but little attended to. I shall therefore here present the society of siphons with a calculation, of which they cannot dispute the truth, and will not, I believe, deny the moderation; and yet perhaps they will be surprized when they see the gross sums of the wine they suck, of the money they pay for it, and of the time they lose, in the course of seven years only.

I reckon that I put a staunch siphon very low, when I put him only at two bottles a day, one with another. This in seven years amounts to four thousand four hundred and ten bottles*, which makes twenty hogsheds and seventy bottles.

Supposing this quantity to cost only four shillings a bottle, which I take to be the lowest price of claret, the sum amounts to eight hundred and eighty-two pounds.

Allowing every siphon but six hours a day to suck his two bottles in, which is a short allowance, that time amounts to six hundred and thirty-eight days, eighteen hours; one full quarter of his life, for the above-mentioned seven years. Can any rational being coolly consider these three gross sums, of wine, and consequently distempers swallowed, of money lavished, and time lost, without shame, regret, and a resolution of reformation?

I am well aware that the numerous society of siphons will say, like sir Tunbelly, "What would this fellow have us do?" To which I am at no loss for an answer. Do any thing else. Preserve and improve that reason, which was given you to be your guide through this world, and to a better. Attend to, and discharge, your religious, your moral, and your social duties. These are occupations worthy of a rational being, they will agreeably and usefully employ

* This calculation is defective, the number of bottles drank in that time amounting to 5110.

your time, and will banish from your breasts that tiresome listlessness, or those tormenting thoughts, from which you endeavour, though in vain, to fly. Is your retrospect uncomfortable? Exert yourselves in time to make your prospect better; and let the former serve as a back-ground to the latter. Cultivate and improve your minds, according to your several educations and capacities. There are several useful books suited to them all. True religion and virtue give a chearful and happy turn to the mind, admit of all true pleasures, and even procure the truest.

Cantabrigius drinks nothing but water, and rides more miles in a year than the keenest sportsman, and with almost equal velocity. The former keeps his head clear, the latter his body in health. It is not from himself that he runs, but to his acquaintance, a synonymous term for his friends. Internally safe, he seeks no sanctuary from himself, no intoxication for his mind. His penetration makes him discover and divert himself with the follies of mankind, which his wit enables him to expose with the truest ridicule, though always without personal offence. Chearful abroad, because happy at home; and thus happy, because virtuous!

 XXXI.

THE WORLD.

 THURSDAY, NOV. 14, 1754. N^o 98.

IT gives me great pleasure that I am able, in this day's paper, to congratulate the polite part of my fellow subjects of both sexes, upon the splendid revival of that most rational entertainment, an Italian opera. Of late years it had seemed to sicken, so that I greatly feared that the unsuccessful efforts, which it made from time to time, were its convulsive and expiring pangs. But it now appears, and indeed much to the honour of this country, that we

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