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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**

XXXIII. The World. Saturday, Dec. 5, 1754. N° 101.

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## XXXIII.

## THE WORLD.

SATURDAY, Dec. 5, 1754.

N<sup>o</sup> 101.

WHEN I intimated in my last paper some distrust of Mr. Johnson's complaisance to the fairer part of his readers, it was because I had a greater opinion of his impartiality and severity as a judge, than of his gallantry as a fine gentleman. And indeed I am well aware of the difficulties he would have to encounter, if he attempted to reconcile the polite, with the grammatical, part of our language. Should he, by an act of power, banish and attain many of the favourite words and expressions, with which the ladies have so profusely enriched our language, he would excite the indignation of the most formidable, because the most lovely, part of his readers: his dictionary would be condemned as a system of tyranny, and he himself, like the last Tarquin, run the risque of being deposed. So popular and so powerful is the female cause! On the other hand, should he, by an act of grace, admit, legitimate, and incorporate into our language those words and expressions, which, hastily begot, owe their birth to the incontinency of female eloquence; what severe censures might he not justly apprehend from the learned part of his readers, who do not understand complaisances of that nature!

For my own part, as I am always inclined to plead the cause of my fair fellow-subjects, I shall now take the liberty of laying before Mr. Johnson those arguments, which upon this occasion may be urged in their favour, as introductory to the compromise which I shall humbly offer and conclude with.

Language is indisputably the more immediate province of the fair sex: there they shine, there they excel. The torrents of their eloquence, especially in the vituperative way, stun all opposition, and bear away, in one promiscuous heap, nouns, verbs, moods, and tenses. If words are  
wanting,

wanting, which indeed happens but seldom, indignation instantly makes new ones; and I have often known four or five syllables that never met one another before, hastily and fortuitously jumbled into some word of mighty import.

Nor is the tender part of our language less obliged to that soft and amiable sex; their love being at least as productive as their indignation. Should they lament in an involuntary retirement the absence of the adored object, they give new murmurs to the brook, new sounds to the echo, and new notes to the plaintive Philomela. But when this happy copiousness flows, as it often does, into gentle numbers, good gods! how is the poetical diction enriched, and the poetical licence extended! Even in common conversation, I never see a pretty mouth opening to speak, but I expect, and am seldom disappointed, some new improvement of our language. I remember many expressive words coined in that fair mint. I assisted at the birth of that most significant word FLIRTATION, which dropped from the most beautiful mouth in the world, and which has since received the sanction of our most accurate Laureat in one of his comedies. Some inattentive and undiscerning people have, I know, taken it to be a term synonymous with coquetry; but I lay hold of this opportunity to undeceive them, and eventually to inform Mr. Johnson, that flirtation is short of coquetry, and intimates only the first hints of approximation, which subsequent coquetry may reduce to those preliminary articles, that commonly end in a definitive treaty.

I was also a witness to the rise and progress of that most important verb, TO FUZZ; which, if not of legitimate birth, is at least of fair extraction. As I am not sure that it has yet made its way into Mr. Johnson's literary retirement, I think myself obliged to inform him that it is at present the most useful and the most used word in our language; since it means no less than dealing twice together with the same pack of cards, for luck's sake, at whist.

Not contented with enriching our language by words absolutely new, my fair countrywomen have gone still farther, and improved it by the application and extension of old ones to various and very different significations. They take a word and change it, like a guinea into shillings for pocket money, to be employed in the several occasional purposes of the day. For instance, the adjective *vast* and  
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its adverb *vastly* mean any thing, and are the fashionable words of the most fashionable people. A fine woman, under this head I comprehend all fine gentlemen too, not knowing in truth where to place them properly, is *vastly* obliged, or *vastly* offended, *vastly* glad, or *vastly* sorry. Large objects are *vastly* great, small ones are *vastly* little; and I had lately the pleasure to hear a fine woman pronounce, by a happy metonymy, a very small gold snuff-box that was produced in company to be *vastly* pretty, because it was *vastly* little. Mr. Johnson will do well to consider seriously to what degree he will restrain the various and extensive significations of this great word.

Another very material point still remains to be considered; I mean the orthography of our language, which is at present very various and unsettled.

We have at present two very different orthographies, the *pedantic*, and the *polite*; the one founded upon certain dry crabbed rules of etymology and grammar, the other singly upon the justness and delicacy of the ear. I am thoroughly persuaded that Mr. Johnson will endeavour to establish the former; and I perfectly agree with him, provided it can be quietly brought about. Spelling, as well as music, is better performed by book, than merely by the ear, which may be variously affected by the same sounds. I therefore most earnestly recommend to my fair countrywomen, as to their faithful or faithless servants, the fine gentlemen of this realm, to surrender, as well for their own private as for the public utility, all their natural rights and privileges of mis-spelling, which they have so long enjoyed, and so vigorously exerted. I have really known very fatal consequences attend that loose and uncertain practice of auricular orthography; of which I shall produce two instances as a sufficient warning.

A very fine gentleman wrote a very harmless innocent letter to a very fine lady, giving her an account of some trifling commissions, which he had executed according to her orders. This letter, though directed to the lady, was, by the mistake of a servant, delivered to, and opened by, her husband; who, finding all his attempts to understand it unsuccessful, took it for granted that it was a concerted cypher, under which a criminal correspondence, not much to his own honour or advantage, was secretly carried on. With the letter in  
his

his hand, and rage in his heart, he went immediately to his wife, and reproached her in the most injurious terms with her supposed infidelity. The lady, conscious of her own innocence, calmly requested to see the grounds of so unjust an accusation; and, being accustomed to the auricular orthography, made shift to read to her incensed husband the most inoffensive letter that ever was written. The husband was undeceived, or at least wise enough to seem so; for in such cases one must not peremptorily decide. However, as sudden impressions are generally pretty strong, he has been observed to be more suspicious ever since.

The other accident had much worse consequences. Matters were happily brought, between a fine gentleman and a fine lady, to the decisive period of an appointment at a third place. *The place where* is always the lover's business, *the time when* the lady's. Accordingly an impatient and rapturous letter from the lover signified to the lady the house and street *where*; to which a tender answer from the lady assented, and appointed the time *when*. But unfortunately, from the uncertainty of the lover's auricular orthography, the lady mistook both house and street, was conveyed in a hackney chair to a wrong one, and in the hurry and agitation, which ladies are sometimes in upon these occasions, rushed into a house where she happened to be known, and her intentions consequently discovered. In the mean time the lover passed three or four hours at the right place, in the alternate agonies of impatient and disappointed love, tender fear, and anxious jealousy.

Such examples really make one tremble; and will, I am convinced, determine my fair fellow-subjects and their adherents to adopt, and scrupulously conform to, Mr. Johnson's rules of true orthography by book. In return to this concession, I seriously advise him to publish, by way of appendix to his great work, a genteel Neological dictionary, containing those polite, though perhaps not strictly grammatical, words and phrases, commonly used, and sometimes understood, by the *beau monde*. By such an act of toleration, who knows but he may, in time, bring them within the pale of the English language? The best Latin dictionaries have commonly

monly a short supplemental one annexed, of the obsolete and barbarous Latin words, which pedants sometimes borrow to shew their erudition. Surely then my country-women, the enrichers, the patronesses, and the harmonizers of our language, deserve greater indulgence. I must also hint to Mr. Johnson, that such a small supplemental dictionary will contribute infinitely to the sale of the great one; and I make no question but that, under the protection of that little work, the great one will be received in the genteelest house. We shall frequently meet with it in ladies dressing-rooms, lying upon the harpsichord, together with the knotting-bag, and signior Di-Giardino's incomparable concertos; and even sometimes in the powder-rooms of our young nobility, upon the same shelf with their German flute, their powder-mask, and their four-horse-whip.

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 XXXIV.

## THE WORLD.

 THURSDAY, January 2, 1755. N<sup>o</sup> 1

AS I am desirous of beginning the new year well, I shall devote this paper to the service of my fair country-women, for whom I have so tender a concern, that I examine into their conduct with a kind of parental vigilance and affection. I sincerely wish to approve, but at the same time am determined to admonish and reprimand, whenever, for their sakes, I may think it necessary. I will not, as far as in me lies, suffer the errors of their minds to disgrace those beautiful dwellings in which they are lodged; nor will I, on the other hand, silently and quietly allow the affectation and abuse of their persons, to reflect contempt and ridicule upon their understandings.

Native, artless beauty has long been the peculiar distinction of my fair fellow-subjects. Our poets have long