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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**

XXXVII. The World. Saturday, Feb 27. 1755. No. 113.

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than two Frenchmen of equal strength and size with himself, I should however be very unwilling to undeceive him of that useful and sanguine error, which certainly made his countrymen triumph in the fields of Poictiers and Crecy.

But there are prejudices of a very different nature from these; prejudices not only founded on original error, but that gave birth and sanction to the most absurd, extravagant, impious, and immoral customs.

Honor, that sacred name, which ought to mean the spirit, the supererogation of virtue, is, by custom, profaned, reduced, and shrunk to mean only a readiness to fight a duel upon either a real or an imaginary affront, and not to cheat at play. No vices nor immoralities whatsoever blast this fashionable character, but rather, on the contrary, dignify and adorn it: and what should banish a man from all society, recommends him in general to the best. He may, with great honor, starve the tradesmen, who by their industry, supply not only his wants, but his luxury; he may debauch his friend's wife, daughter, or sister; he may, in short, unboundedly gratify every appetite, passion, and interest, and scatter desolation round him, if he be but ready for single combat, and a scrupulous observer of all the moral obligations of a gamester.

These are the prejudices for wit to ridicule, for satire to lash, for the rigor of the Law to punish, and, (which would be the most effectual of all) for fashion to discountenance and proscribe. And these shall in their turns be the subjects of some future papers.

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XXXVII.

T H E W O R L D.

SATURDAY, Feb. 27. 1755. No. 113.

**T**HE custom of DUELLING is most evidently "the result of the passions of the many, and of the designs of a few;" but here the definition stops; since far from being "the ape of reason," it prevails in open defiance

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ance of it. It is the manifest offspring of barbarity and folly, a monstrous birth, and distinguished by the most shocking and ridiculous marks of both its parents.

I would not willingly give offence to the politer part of my readers, whom I acknowledge to be my best customers, and therefore I will not so much as hint at the impiety of this practice; nor will I labor to shew how repugnant it is to instinct, reason, and every moral and social obligation, even to the fashionable fitness of things. Viewed on the criminal side, it excites horror; on the absurd side, it is an inexhaustible fund of ridicule. The guilt has been considered and exposed by abler pens than mine, and indeed ought to be censured with more dignity than a fugitive weekly paper can pretend to: I shall therefore content myself with ridiculing the folly of it.

The antients most certainly have had very imperfect notions of HONOR, for they had none of DUELLING. One reads, it is true, of murders committed every now and then among the Greeks and Romans, prompted only by interest or revenge, and performed without the least Attic politeness, or Roman urbanity. No letters of gentle invitation were sent to any man to come and have his throat cut the next morning; and we may observe that Milo had not the common decency to give Clodius, the most profligate of men, the most dangerous of citizens, and his own inveterate enemy, an equal chance of destroying him.

This delicacy of sentiment, this refinement of manners, was reserved for the politer Goths, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, &c. to introduce, cultivate, and establish. I must confess that they have generally been considered as barbarous nations; and to be sure there are some circumstances which seem to favour that opinion. They made open war upon learning, and gave no quarter even to the monuments of arts and sciences. But then it must be owned, on the other hand, that upon those ruins, they established the honorable and noble science of HOMICIDE, dignified, exalted, and ascertained TRUE HONOR, worshipped it as their deity, and sacrificed to it hecatombs of human victims.

In those happy days, HONOR, that is, single combat, was the great and unerring test of civil rights, moral actions, and sound doctrines. It was sanctified by the  
church,

church, and the churchmen were occasionally allowed the honor and pleasure of it; for we read of many instances of DUELS between men and priests. Nay, it was, without appeal, the infallible test of female chastity. If a princess, or any lady of distinction, was suspected of a little incontinency, some brave champion, who was commonly privy to, or perhaps the author of it, stood forth in her defence, and asserted her innocence with the point of his sword or lance. If, by his activity, skill, strength and courage, he murdered the accuser, the lady was spotless; but, if her champion fell, her guilt was manifest. This heroic gallantry in defence of the fair, I presume, occasioned that association of ideas, otherwise seemingly unrelative to each other, of the BRAVE and the FAIR: for indeed in those days it behoved a lady, who had the least regard for her reputation, to chuse a lover of uncommon activity, strength, and courage. This notion, as I am well assured, still prevails in many reputable families about Covent-garden, where the BRAVE in the kitchen, are always within call of the FAIR in the first or second floor.

By this summary method of proceeding, the quibbles, the delays, and the expence of the law were avoided, and the troublesome shackles of the gospel knocked off; HONOR ruling in their stead. To prove the utility and justice of this method, I cannot help mentioning a very extraordinary DUEL between a man of distinction and a dog, in the year 1371, in presence of king Charles the fifth of France. Both the relation and the print of this DUEL are to be found in father Monfaucon.

A gentleman of the court was supposed to have murdered another, who had been missing for some days. This suspicion arose from the mute testimony of the absent person's dog, a large Irish greyhound, who with uncommon rage attacked this supposed murderer wherever he met him. As he was a gentleman, and a man of very nice honor, though by the way he really had murdered the man, he could not bear lying under so dishonorable a suspicion, and therefore applied to the king for leave to justify his innocence by single combat with the said dog. The king, being a great lover of justice, granted his suit, ordered lists to be made ready, appointed the time, and named the  
weapons.

weapons. The gentleman was to have an offensive club in his hand, the dog a defensive tub to resort to occasionally. The Irish greyhound willingly met this fair inviter at the time and place appointed; for it has always been observable of that particular breed, that they have an uncommon alacrity at single combat. They fought, the dog prevailed, and almost killed the honorable gentleman, who had then the honor to confess his guilt, and of being hanged for it in a few days.

When letters, arts, and sciences, revived in Europe, the science of HOMICIDE was farther cultivated and improved. If, on the one hand, it lost a little of the extent of its jurisdiction, on the other, it acquired great precision, clearness, and beauty, by the care and pains of the very best Italian and Spanish authors, who reduced it into a regular body, and delighted the world with their admirable codes, digests, pandects, and reports, *della cavalleresca*, in some hundreds of volumes. Almost all possible cases of HONOR were considered and stated; two-and-thirty different sorts of lies were distinguished, and the adequate satisfaction necessary for each, was, with great solidity and precision ascertained. A kick with a thin shoe was declared more injurious to honor, though not so painful to the part kicked, than a kick with a thick shoe; and in short, a thousand other discoveries of the like nature, equally beneficial to society, were communicated to the world in those voluminous treasures of HONOR.

In the present degenerate age, the fundamental laws of HONOR are exploded and ridiculed, and single combat thought a very uncertain, and even unjust, decision of civil property, female chastity, and criminal accusations: but I would humbly ask, why? Is not single combat as just a decision of any other thing whatsoever, as it is of veracity, the case to which it is now in a manner confined? I am of opinion that there are more men in the world who lie and fight too, than there are who will lie and not fight; because I believe there are more men in the world who have, than who want, courage. But, if fighting is the test of veracity, my readers of condition will, I hope, pardon me, when I say, that my future inquiries and researches

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after truth shall be altogether confined to the three regiments of guards.

There is one reason indeed, which makes me suspect that a DUEL may not always be the infallible criterion of veracity, and that is, that the combatants very rarely meet upon equal terms. I beg leave to state a case, which may very probably, and not even unfrequently happen, and which yet is not provided for, nor even mentioned in the INSTITUTES OF HONOR.

A very lean, slender, active young fellow of great HONOR, weighing perhaps not quite twelve stone, and who has from his youth taken lessons of HOMICIDE from a murder-master, has, or thinks he has, a point of honor to discuss with an unwieldy, fat, middle-aged gentleman, of nice HONOR likewise, weighing four-and-twenty stone, and who in his youth may not possibly have had the same commendable application to the noble science of HOMICIDE. The lean gentleman sends a very civil letter to the fat one, inviting him to come and be killed by him the next morning in Hyde-park. Should the fat gentleman accept this invitation, and waddle to the place appointed, he goes to inevitable slaughter. Now, upon this state of the case, might not the fat gentleman, consistent with the rules of HONOR, return the following answer to the invitation of the lean one?

“ SIR,

“ I find by your letter that you do me the justice to  
 “ believe, that I have the true notions of honor that be-  
 “ come a gentleman; and I hope I shall never give you  
 “ reason to change your opinion. As I entertain the same  
 “ opinion of you, I must suppose that you will not de-  
 “ sire that we should meet upon unequal terms, which  
 “ must be the case were we to meet to-morrow. At pre-  
 “ sent I unfortunately weigh four-and-twenty stone, and I  
 “ guess that you do not exceed twelve. From this cir-  
 “ cumstance singly, I am doubly the mark that you are;  
 “ but besides this, you are active, and I am unwieldy. I  
 “ therefore propose to you, that from this day forwards,

“ we

“ we severally endeavour by all possible means, you  
 “ to fatten, and I to waste, till we can meet at the  
 “ medium of eighteen stone. I will lose no time on my  
 “ part, being impatient to prove to you that I am not  
 “ quite unworthy of the good opinion which you are pleas-  
 “ ed to express of,

S I R,

“ Your very humble servant.

“ *P. S.* I believe it may not be amiss for us to com-  
 “ municate to each other, from time to time, our  
 “ gradations of increase or decrease, towards the de-  
 “ sired medium, in which, I presume, two or three  
 “ pounds more or less, on either side, ought not to  
 “ be considered.”

This, among many more cases that I could mention, sufficiently proves, not only the expediency, but the necessity, of restoring, revising, and perhaps adding to, the practice, rules and statutes, of single combat, as it flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I grant that it would probably make the common law useless; but little, trifling, and private interests ought not to stand in the way of great, public, and national advantages.

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XXXVIII.

T H E W O R L D.

THURSDAY, March 6, 1755. N<sup>o</sup> 114.

**T**HE notion of BIRTH, as it is commonly called and established by custom, is also the manifest result of *the prejudices of the many, and of the designs of a few.* It is the child of Pride and Folly, coupled together by that industrious pandar Self-love. It is surely the strongest instance, and the weakest prop, of human vanity. If it means any thing, it means a long lineal descent from a founder,