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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**

XLII. The World. Thursday, Nov. 20, 1755. N° 151.

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conversation, which alienates and provokes. Great talents make a man famous, great merit makes him respected, and great learning makes him esteemed; but GOOD-BREEDING alone can make him be loved.

I recommend it in a more particular manner to my country women, as the greatest ornament to such of them as have beauty, and the safest refuge for those who have not. It facilitates the victories, decorates the triumphs, and secures the conquests of beauty, or in some degree atones for the want of it. It almost deifies a fine woman, and procures respect at least to those, who have not charms enough to be admired.

Upon the whole, though GOOD-BREEDING cannot, strictly speaking, be called a virtue, yet it is productive of so many good effects, that, in my opinion, it may justly be reckoned more than a mere accomplishment.

 XLII.

THE WORLD.

 THURSDAY, Nov. 20, 1755. N^o 151.

I WAS lately subpoenaed, by a card, to a general assembly at Lady Townly's, where I went so awkwardly early, that I found nobody but the five or six people who had dined there, and who for want of hands enough for play, were reduced to the cruel necessity of conversing till something better should offer. Lady Townly observed with concern and impatience, "that people of fashion now came intolerably late, and in a glut at once, which laid the lady of the house under great difficulties, to make the parties properly." "That, no doubt," said Manly, "is to be lamented; and the more so, as it seems to give your ladyship some concern: but in the mean time, for want of something better to do, I should be glad to know the true meaning of a term that you have just made use of, *people of fashion*. I confess, I have never yet had a precise and clear idea of it; and

“ and I am sure I cannot apply more properly for information than to this company, which is most unquestionably composed of *people of fashion*, whatever *people of fashion* may be. I therefore beg to know the meaning of that term : what are they, who are they, and what constitutes, I had almost said, anoints them, *people of fashion* ?”

These questions, instead of receiving immediate answers, occasioned a general silence of above a minute, which perhaps was the result of the whole company's having discovered, for the first time, that they had long and often made use of a term which they had never understood : for a little reflection frequently produces those discoveries. Belinda first broke this silence, by saying, “ One well knows who are meant by *people of fashion*, though one does not just know how to describe them : they are those that one generally lives with ; they are people of a certain sort.”—“ They certainly are so,” interrupted Manly ; “ but the point is of what sort ? If you mean by people of a certain sort, yourself, which is commonly the meaning of those who make use of that expression, you are indisputably in the right, as you have all the qualifications that can, or, at least, ought to constitute and adorn a *woman of fashion*. But pray, must all *women of fashion* have all your accomplishments ? If so, the myriads of them which I had imagined from what I heard every day, and every where, will dwindle into a handful.” “ Without having those accomplishments which you so partially allow me,” answered Belinda, “ I still pretend to be a *woman of fashion* ; a character which I cannot think requires an uncommon share of talents to merit.” “ That is the very point,” replied Manly, “ which I want to come at ; and therefore give me leave to question you a little more particularly. You have some advantages, which even your modesty will not allow you to disclaim, such as your birth and fortune : do they constitute you a *woman of fashion* ?” As Belinda was going to answer, Bellair pertly interposed, and said, “ Neither, to be sure, Mr. Manly : if birth constituted *fashion*, we must look for it in that inestimable treasure of useful knowledge, the peerage of England ; or if wealth, we should find the very best at the Bank, and at Garraway's.” “ Well then, Bellair,” said Manly, “ since

“ since you have taken upon you to be Belinda's sponsor,
 “ let me ask you two or three questions, which You can
 “ more properly answer than she could. Is it her beauty ?”
 “ By no means neither,” replied Bellair; “ for at that
 “ rate, there might perhaps be a *woman of fashion* with a
 “ gold chain about her neck in the city, or, with a fat
 “ amber necklace in the country; prodigies, as yet un-
 “ heard of and unseen.” “ Is it then her wit and good-
 “ breeding ?” continued Manly. “ Each contributes,” an-
 “ swered Bellair, ” but both would not be sufficient, with-
 “ out a certain *je ne sais quoi*, a something or other that I
 “ feel better than I can explain.”

Here Dorimant, who had sat all this time silent, but
 looked mischievous, said, “ I could say something—
 “ Ay, and something very impertinent, according to cus-
 “ tom,” answered Belinda; “ so hold your tongue,
 “ I charge you.” “ You are singularly charitable, Belin-
 “ da,” replied Dorimant, “ in being so sure that I was
 “ going to be impertinent, only because I was going to
 “ speak. Why this suspicion of me ?” “ Why! because
 “ I know you to be an odious, abominable creature, up-
 “ on all subjects of this kind.” This amicable quarrel was
 put an end to by Harriet, who, on a sudden, and with
 her usual vivacity, cried out, “ I am sure I have it now,
 “ and can tell you exactly “ what *people of fashion* are:
 “ they are just the reverse of your *odd people*.” “ Very
 “ possible, madam,” answered Manly, “ and therefore I
 “ could wish that you would give yourself the trouble of de-
 “ fining *odd people*; and so, by the rule of contraries, help
 “ us to a true notion of *people of fashion*.” “ Ay, that I
 “ can very easily do,” said Harriet. “ In the first place,
 “ your *odd people* are those that one never lets in, unless
 “ one is at home to the whole town.” “ A little more parti-
 “ cular, dear Harriet,” interrupted Manly. “ So I will,”
 said Harriet, “ for I hate them all. There are several
 “ sorts of them. Your prudes, for instance, who respect and
 “ value themselves upon the unblemished purity of their
 “ characters; who rail at the indecency of the times, censure
 “ the most innocent freedoms, and suspect the Lord knows
 “ what, if they do but observe a close and familiar whif-
 “ per between a man and a woman, in a remote corner
 “ of the room. There are besides a sober, formal, sort
 “ of married women, insipid creatures, who lead do-
 “ mestic

"mestic lives, and who can be merry, as they think at
 "home, with their own and their husbands relations, par-
 "ticularly at Christmas. Like turtles they are true and
 "tender to their lawful mates, and breed like rabbits, to
 "beggar and perpetuate their families, these are very *odd*
 "women, to be sure; but deliver me from your severe and
 "august dowagers, who are the scourges of *people of*
 "fashion, by infesting all public places, in order to make
 "their spiteful remarks. One meets them every where,
 "and they seem to have the secret of multiplying them-
 "selves into ten different places at once. Their poor hor-
 "ses, like those of the sun, go round the world every day,
 "baiting only at eleven in the morning, and six in the
 "evening, at their parish churches. They speak as mov-
 "ingly of their *poor late lords*, as if they had ever cared
 "for one another; and, to do them honor, repeat
 "some of the many silly things they used to say. Lastly,
 "there are your maiden ladies of riper years, orphans
 "of distinction, who live together by twos and threes,
 "who club their Stocks for a neat little house, a light-
 "bodied coach, and a foot-boy—" "And," added
 "Bellair, "quarrel every day about the dividend." "True,"
 "said Harriet, "they are not the sweetest tempered crea-
 "tures in the world; but after all, one must forgive them
 "some malignity, in consideration of their disappoint-
 "ments. Well, have I now described *odd people* to your
 "satisfaction?" "Admirably," answered Manly; "and so
 "well, that one can, to a great degree at least, judge of
 "their antipodes, *the people of fashion*. But still there seems
 "something wanting: for the present account, by the rule
 "of contraries, stands only thus: that *women of fashion*
 "must not care for their husbands, must not go to church,
 "and must not have unblemished, or at least unsuspected,
 "reputations. Now though all these are very commen-
 "dable qualifications, it must be owned, they are but
 "negative ones, and consequently there must be some po-
 "sitive ones necessary to compleat so amiable a character."
 "I was going to add," interrupted Harriet, "which by
 "the way, was more than I engaged for, that *people of*
 "*fashion* were properly those who set the fashions, and
 "who gave the tone of dress, language, manners, and
 "pleasures, to the town." "I admit it," said Manly;
 "but what I want still to know is, who gave them power,
 " or

“ or did they usurp it ? for, by the nature of that power, “ it does not seem to me to admit of a succession by hereditary and divine right.” “ Were I allowed to speak,” said Dorimant, “ perhaps I could both shorten and clear up this case. But I dare not, unless Belinda, to whom I profess implicit obedience, gives me leave.” “ Even let him speak, Belinda,” said Harriet; “ I know he will abuse us, but we are used to him.” “ Well, say your say then,” said Belinda. “ See what an impertinent sneer he has already.” Upon this Dorimant, addressing himself more particularly to Belinda, and smiling said,

“ Then think

“ That he, who thus commanded dares to speak,
“ Unless commanded, would have died in silence.”

“ O, your servant, sir,” said Belinda; “ that fit of humility will, I am sure, not last long; but however go on.” “ I will, to answer Manly’s question,” said Dorimant, “ which, by the way, has something the air of a catechism. Who made these *people of fashion*? I give this short and plain answer; they made one another. The men, by their attentions and credit, made the *women of fashion*; and the women by their supposed or real favours, make the *men* such. They are mutually necessary to each other.” “ Impertinent enough of all conscience,” said Belinda. “ So, without the assistance of you fashionable men, what should we poor women be?” “ Why faith,” replied Dorimant, “ but *odd women*, I doubt, as we should be but odd fellows without your friendly aid to fashion us. In one word, a frequent and reciprocal collision of the two sexes is absolutely necessary, to give one that high polish, which is properly called *fashion*.” “ Mr. Dorimant has, I own,” said Manly, “ opened new and important matter; and my scattered and confused notions seem now to take some form, and tend to a point. But as examples always best clear up abstruse matters, let us now propose some examples of both sorts, and take the opinions of the company upon them. For instance, I will offer one to your consideration. Is Berynthia a *woman of fashion* or not?” The whole company readily, and almost at once, answered, “ Doubtless she is.” “ That may be,” said Manly, “ but why?”

“ why? For she has neither birth nor fortune, and but
 “ small remains of beauty.” “ All that is true, I confess,”
 “ said Belinda; “ but she is well drest, well bred, good
 “ humored, and always ready to go with one any where.”
 “ Might I presume,” said Dorimant, “ to add a title,
 “ and perhaps the best, to her claims of *fashion*, I should
 “ say that she was of Belville’s creation, who is the very
 “ fountain of honor of that sort. He dignified her by his
 “ addressees; and those who have the good fortune to
 “ share his reputation”—“ Have,” said Belinda with some
 warmth, “ the misfortune to lose their own.” “ I told
 “ you,” turning to Harriet, “ what would happen if we
 “ allowed him to speak: and just so it happened; for the
 “ gentleman has almost in plain terms asserted, that a wo-
 “ man cannot be a *woman of fashion* till she has lost her
 “ reputation.” “ Fye, Belinda, how you wrong me!”
 replied Dorimant. “ Lost her reputation! Such a
 “ thought never entered into my head; I only meant mis-
 “ laid it. With a very little care she will find it again.”
 “ There you are in the right,” said Bellair; “ for it is
 “ most certain that the reputation of a *woman of fashion*
 “ should not be too muddy.” “ True,” replied Dorimant,
 “ nor too limpid neither; it must not be mere rock water,
 “ cold and clear; it should sparkle a little.” “ Well,”
 said Harriet, “ now that Berynthia is unanimously voted
 “ a *woman of fashion*, what think you of Loveit? Is she,
 “ or is she not one?” “ If she is one,” answered Dorimant,
 “ I am very much mistaken if it is not of Mirabel’s cre-
 “ ation.”—“ By *writ*, I believe,” said Bellair, “ for I
 “ saw him give her a letter one night at the opera.” “ But
 “ she has other good claims too,” added Dorimant. “ Her
 “ fortune, though not large, is easy; and nobody fears
 “ certain applications from her. She has a small house of
 “ her own, which she has fitted up very prettily, and is
 “ often *at home*, not to crowds indeed, but to people of
 “ the best fashion, from twenty, occasionally down to
 “ two; and let me tell you, that nothing makes a woman
 “ of Loveit’s sort better received abroad, than being often
 “ *at home*.” “ I own,” said Bellair, “ that I looked upon
 “ her rather as a genteel led-captain, a postscript to *women*
 “ *of fashion*.” “ Perhaps too sometimes the cover,” answer-
 ed Dorimant, “ and if so, an equal. You may joke as
 “ much as you please upon poor Loveit, but she is the
 “ best

"best humored creature in the world; and I maintain
 "her to be a *woman of fashion*; for, in short, we all roll
 "with her, as the soldiers say." "I want to know,"
 said Belinda, "what you will determine upon a character
 "very different from the two last, I mean lady Loveless:
 "is she a *woman of fashion*?" "Dear Belinda," answered
 Harriet hastily, "how could she possibly come into your
 "head?" "Very naturally," said Belinda; "she has
 "birth, beauty, and fortune; she is well bred." "I
 "own it," said Harriet; "but still she is handsome
 "without meaning, well shaped without air, genteel
 "without graces, and well drest without taste. She is
 "such an insipid creature, she seldom comes about, but
 "lives at home with her lord, and so domestically tame,
 "that she eats out of his hand, and teaches her young
 "ones to peck out of her own. Odd, very odd, take my
 "word for it." "Ay, mere rock water," said Dorimant,
 "and, as I told you an hour ago, that will not do."
 "No, most certainly," added Bellair; "all that reserve,
 "simplicity, and coldness, can never do. It seems to me
 "rather that the true composition of *people of fashion*, like
 "that of Venice treacle, consists of an infinite number of
 "fine ingredients, but all of the warm kind." "Truce
 "with your filthy treacle," said Harriet; "and since the
 "conversation has hitherto chiefly turned upon us poor
 "women, I think we have a right to insist upon the defi-
 "nition of you *men of fashion*." "No doubt of it," said
 Dorimant; "nothing is more just, and nothing more
 "easy. Allowing some small difference for modes and
 "habits, the *men* and the *women of fashion* are in truth the
 "counterparts of each other; they fit like tallies, are
 "made of the same wood, and are cut out for one another."

As Dorimant was going on, probably to illustrate his
 assertion, a valet de chambre proclaimed in a solemn man-
 ner the arrival of the dutchess dowager of Mattadore and
 her three daughters, who were immediately followed by
 lord Formal, sir Peter Plausible, and divers others of both
 sexes, and of equal importance. The lady of the house,
 with infinite skill and indefatigable pains, soon peopled the
 several card-tables, with the greatest propriety, and to
 universal satisfaction; and the night concluded with flams,
 honors, best-games, pairs, pair-royals, and all other such
 rational demonstrations of joy.

For

For my own part, I made my escape as soon as I possibly could, with my head full of the most extraordinary conversation, which I had just heard, and which from having taken no part in it, I had attended to the more, and retained the better. I went straight home, and immediately reduced it into writing, as I here offer it for the present edification of my readers. But, as it has furnished me with great and new lights, I propose, as soon as possible, to give the public a new and complete system of ethics, founded upon these principles of *people of fashion*; as, in my opinion, they are better calculated than many others, for the use and instruction of all private families.

 XLIII.

THE WORLD.

THURSDAY, Aug. 12, 1756. N^o 189.

WE are accused by the French, and perhaps but too justly, of having no word in our language, which answers to their word *police*, which therefore we have been obliged to adopt, not having, as they say, the thing.

It does not occur to me that we have any one word in our language, I hope not from the same reason, to express the ideas which they comprehend under their word *les mœurs*. *Manners* are too little, *morals* too much. I should define it thus; *a general exterior decency, fitness, and propriety of conduct, in the common intercourse of life.*

Cicero in his *Offices*, makes use of the word *decorum* in this sense, to express what the Greeks signified by their word (I will not shock the eyes of my polite readers with Greek types) *to prepon*.

The thing however is unquestionably of importance, by whatever word it may be dignified or degraded, distinguished or mistaken; it shall therefore be the subject
of