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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**

Letter XC. To The Same.

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L E T T E R X C.

T O T H E S A M E.

London, Nov. 26, O. S. 1750.

M A D A M,

TH E letter and the packet, you did me the favour to send me, came to hand but six days ago; for both which I beg you will accept my thanks.

As for the causes you send me to try, you bring them (to speak in the law style) *coram non iudice*, and, should I presume to give my verdict, an appeal might justly be lodged against my sentence: but no matter, every one takes upon him to judge, and too often those who are least able are the most peremptory. I, therefore, send you my decrees, which you may cause to be struck out of the records, whenever you please.

In primis, I decide without hesitation, that cardinal Richelieu is the author of his own political testament*, and that Voltaire's pleadings prove nothing to the contrary. The work evidently bears the stamp of a statesman, and a churchman.

I cannot so easily decide the cause at present depending between your king and your clergy. The letters against the clergy are well written, and so are the answers; but, without pretending to decide, I am for the king, and I consider the clergy of all religions, as a body of men, who have separate interests and views, distinct from those of the rest of mankind. The most despotic kings exercise no jurisdiction but over the bodies and goods of men: but all the clergy, from the great lama of the Thibet to his holiness at Rome, and the archbishop of Canterbury at London, aspire to despotism over the mind; a despotism, which is the more dangerous, as, when once it is established, it extends to every thing else. The body and goods are no better than rags, those gentlemen are the sole dispensers of your salvation, and what will you not do to obtain it? This has been sufficiently evinced during seven or eight centuries of the reign of the clergy and of ignorance.

But

* The authenticity of that celebrated work was attacked with great speciousness