



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

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 XCVIII. To Lady***.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-52077](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-52077)

L E T T E R XCVIII.

To Lady * * * †.

YOU will do much better, madam, to trust to your own judgment than to mine, upon the letters in question, as well as upon every other matter; but your commands must be obeyed. I must, therefore, have the honor to tell you frankly, that the author † will not find many persons inclined to engage for the payment of 200 livres per annum for two letters, such as those, which he has offered us as a specimen.

For instance, when he attempts to prove that those who have treated of the word *humour* have mistaken the meaning of it, he makes it but too plain, that he is himself totally unacquainted with it.

The definition of it, however, is very simple: *humour* is a just and striking representation of whatever singularity and ridicule there may be in any character; and a *man of humour* is one, who strongly seizes the distinguishing peculiarities of that character, and exposes them in the strongest colours. It is generally imagined that we Englishmen are solely and exclusively possessed of this faculty; but there is not the least truth in the supposition. No man ever had so much of it as Molière, of which his *Miser*, his *Jealous Man*, and his *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, are convincing proofs; and French comedy furnishes a multiplicity of instances beside these. If, indeed, it be said, that there is no country in Europe, which abounds in such a variety of singular characters, I believe the assertion may be true. But humour does not consist in this. The person, in whom the singularity or the ridicule is, has no humour, it is his natural character; but it is the man who feels and describes this ridicule, or this oddity, who has the humour. It is time, however, that I should put an

† This letter was given to me by the lady, to whom it was written, whose name I am not at liberty to mention. Whether the definition of *humour* contained in it will be equally satisfactory to all readers, is uncertain. It is however ingenious; but indeed the word itself seems to admit