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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 XXII. To The Same.

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

The person taking this oath should be obliged to recite it distinctly and deliberately, and not to be allowed to mutter it over in that indecent and slovenly manner, in which oaths are generally taken. I will venture to add, those who will not observe this oath, taken in this manner, will still less observe any abjuration of the Pope's dispensing power; since such abjuration is, by all papists looked upon as a nullity.

I would also advise that all penalties of death, which in these cases must end in impunity, should be changed into close imprisonment, for a term of years, or in some cases for life. Then there would be perhaps detections and prosecutions; but in case of death there will be none; for who will go and hang a poor devil only for being a regular, or an enthusiast?

When I tell you that these are my thoughts upon this subject, I do not affirm that I think at all, for in truth; I am so weak in body at this time, that I presume I am just as weak in mind too. This only I am sure of, that I am, my dear lord, most faithfully

Yours,

CHESTERFIELD.

LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

London, March 12, 1755.

MY DEAR LORD,

WHITE* was puzzled, what account to give you of me, and therefore gave you none, and, to say the truth, I am pretty much in the same case myself; only resolved to answer as well as I can your kind enquiries after me. I am tolerably well one day, ill the next, and well

* An old and faithful servant of lord Chesterfield.

again

again perhaps the third; that is, my disorders in my stomach, and my giddinesses in my head, return frequently and unexpectedly. Proper care and medicines remove them for the time, but none will prevent them. My deafness grows gradually worse, which in my mind implies a total one before it be long. In this unhappy situation, which I have reason to suppose will every day grow worse, I still keep up my spirits tolerably, that is, I am free from melancholy, which I think is all that can be expected. This I impute to that degree of philosophy, which I have acquired by long experience of the world. I have enjoyed all its pleasures, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low; whereas those, who have not experienced, always over-rate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. It is a common notion, and like many common ones a very false one, that those, who have led a life of pleasure and business, can never be easy in retirement; whereas I am persuaded that they are the only people who can, if they have any sense, and reflection. They can look back *oculo irretorto* (without an evil eye) upon what they from knowledge despise; others have always a hankering after what they are not acquainted with. I look upon all that has passed, as one of those romantic dreams, that opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream. When I say that I have no regret, I do not mean that I have no remorse; for a life of either business or still more pleasure, never was, nor never will be, a state of innocence. But God, who knows the strength of human passions, and the weakness of human reason, will, it is to be hoped, rather mercifully pardon, than justly punish, acknowledged errors.

I suppose you already know that you have a new lord lieutenant, lord Hartington, who, it is thought, will heal and compose your divisions. I heartily wish, for the sake of the country, that it may prove so.

A war with France is generally looked upon here as inevitable; but for my own part, I cannot help thinking as well as wishing that things may end quietly in a treaty. I am so remote, and so indifferent a spectator, except in the

wishes, which every man owes to his country, that I am ill informed myself, and consequently no good informer of others.

I hope your little family are all well, and continue to answer your care in their education. May you and they be long and mutually comforts to each other! Adieu, my dear lord; no man living can be more sincerely and affectionately than I am,

Your faithful friend and servant,

CHESTERFIELD.

L E T T E R XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

Blackheath, June 26, 1755.

MY DEAR LORD,

COULD I take any thing ill of you, who I am sure never meant any to me or any man living, it would be your suspecting that I did; which I believe is the first unjust suspicion that ever you entertained of any body, and I am the more concerned at it, because I know that it gave you uneasiness. I confess myself four letters in your debt, but, to tell you the truth, I have of late contracted so many debts of that kind that I am very near a bankruptcy, though not a fraudulent one, upon my word, for I will honestly declare my circumstances; and then my creditors will, I dare say, compound with me upon reasonable terms. White told you true, when he told you that I was well, by which he meant all that he could know, which was, that I had no immediate illness; but he did not know the inward feelings, which increasing deafness and gradually declining health occasion. Some time before I left London I had a severe return of my old complaints in my head and stomach, which are always followed