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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 XLI. To The Same.

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360 LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS
world, and my thoughts are employed about the other. However, while I crawl upon this planet, I think myself obliged to do what good I can, in my narrow domestic sphere, to my fellow creatures, and to wish them all the good I cannot do. What share you will always have in those wishes, our long friendship, and your own merit, which I have so long known, will best tell you.

I am, with great truth and just esteem,

Your most faithful friend and servant,

CHESTERFIELD.

LETTER XLI.

TO THE SAME.

London, April 29, 1760.

MY DEAR LORD,

MR. des Voeux brought me your kind letter, and will send me (for he is gone to Germany) his Ecclesiastes as soon as it comes out. *A propos* of that book, I hope you have seen Voltaire's *précis* of it in verse. Nothing in my mind can be finer, than both the sense and poetry of it; for fear that you should not have seen it, I will give you two passages out of it, that struck me exceedingly.

Dieu nous donna les biens, il veut qu'on en jouisse,
Mais n'oubliez jamais leur cause et leur auteur,
Et lorsque vous goûtez sa divine faveur,
O! mortels gardez vous d'oublier sa justice*.

* These lines may be thus rendered in English:

God gave us blessings, freely to enjoy;
Mortals! remember from whose hand they came,
And, while you taste his gracious gifts with joy,
Both love and reverence his awful name.

This

This is exactly from the original, but the following lines are in my mind a great improvement.

Répandez vos bienfaits avec magnificence,
Même aux moins vertueux ne les refusez pas,
Ne vous informez pas de leur reconnoissance,
Il est grand, il est beau de faire des ingrats*.

I now read Solomon with a sort of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and as vain, though not so wise as he; but am now at last wise enough to feel and attest the truth of his reflection, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. This truth is never sufficiently discovered or felt by mere speculation, experience in this case is necessary for conviction, though perhaps at the expence of some morality.

I do not comprehend you in Ireland *en détail*, but this I comprehend *en gros*, that that poor country will be undone. All the causes, that ever destroyed any country, conspire in this point to ruin Ireland; premature luxury, for your luxury outstrips your riches, which in other countries it only accompanies; a total disregard to the public interest, both in the governed and the governors; a profligate and shameless avowal of private interest; a universal corruption of both morals and manners. All this is more than necessary to subvert any constitution in the world.

You expect, from the interest which I know you take in it, to have some account of my wretched and almost destroyed constitution; but I will only tell you in short, that I am not worse than I was, and that I know I never can be better than I am now, though that is bad enough of all conscience. My stay in this world cannot be long. God, who placed me here, only knows when he will order me out of it; but whenever he does, I shall most willingly obey his command, with confidence in his mercy. Adieu, my dear lord. I am most sincerely yours,

CHESTERFIELD.

* Diffuse your bounties with a liberal hand;
Nor spare the least deserving to relieve.
No thanks the generous mind should e'er demand;
'Tis great, 'tis godlike, unrepaid to give.

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