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Earl of Chesterfield

Complete Works



Series Fourteen

The Complete Works of
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

(1694-1773)



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Philip Dormer Stanhope (1900) by Sidney Lee

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A stylized, cursive signature of the name 'Chesterfield' in black ink.

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Version 1

The Complete Works of
Philip Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield



By Delphi Classics, 2024

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Complete Works of Earl of Chesterfield



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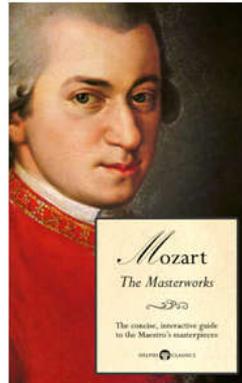
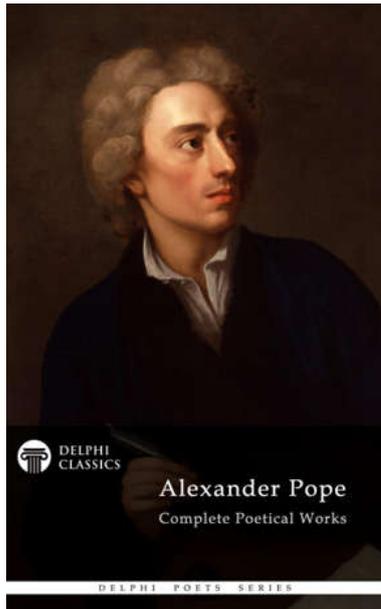
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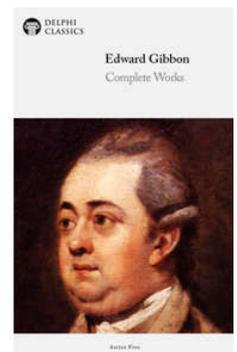
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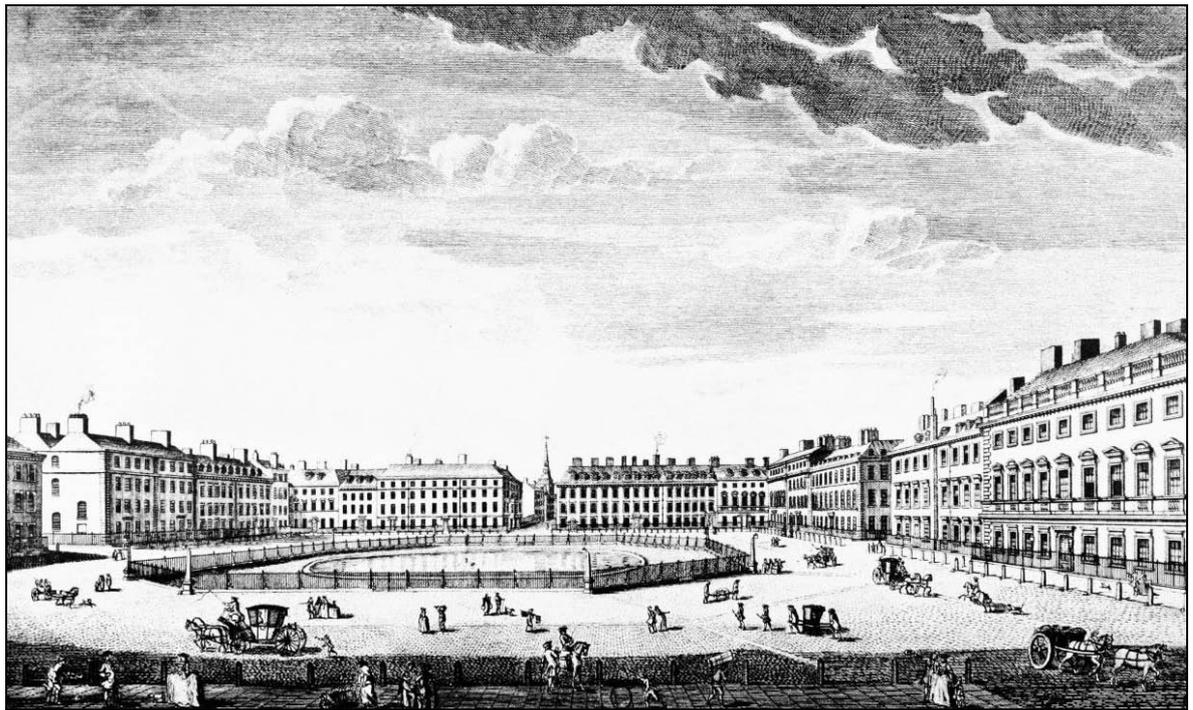
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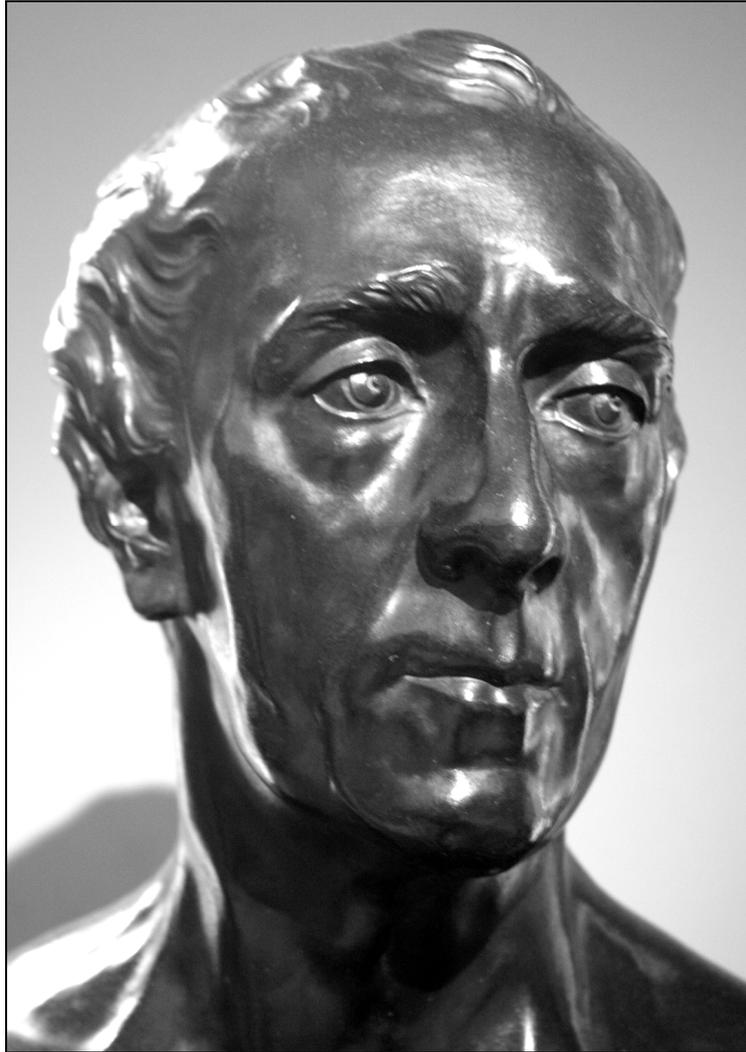
The Letters



32 St. James's Square, London — the site of the Earl Chesterfield's birthplace



St James's Square, c. 1752



Chesterfield by Roubiliac, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1745

The Drapier's Letter to the Good People of Ireland (1745)



This letter was written by Chesterfield in imitation of the style of the *Drapier's Letters*, a series of seven pamphlets written between 1724 and 1725 by the Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Jonathan Swift, to rouse public opinion in Ireland against the imposition of a privately minted copper coinage that Swift believed to be of inferior quality. William Wood was granted letters patent to mint the coin and Swift saw the licensing of the patent as corrupt. In response, Swift represented Ireland as constitutionally and financially independent of Britain in the *Drapier's Letters*. Chesterfield's imitation was addressed to poorer Papists, pointing out the dangers of joining the 1745 Rebellion.



Jonathan Swift by Charles Jervas, 1718

THE DRAPIER'S LETTER TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF IRELAND



MY DEAR COUNTRYMEN,

IT is now some considerable time since I troubled you with my advice; and, as I am growing old and infirm, I was in good hopes to have been quietly laid in my grave, before any occasion offered of addressing you again: but my affection for you, which does not decay, though my poor body does, obliges me once more to put you in mind of your true interests, that you may not unwarily run yourselves into danger and distress, for want of understanding, or seriously considering it.

I have many reasons to believe, that there are not few among you, who secretly rejoice at the rebellion which is now raised in Scotland; and perhaps conceive hopes of some alteration for the better, in their circumstances and condition, if it should succeed. It is those mistaken people whom I design to talk to in this letter, and I desire no more of them than to give me a fair hearing; examining coolly with themselves, whether what I shall say be true.

It is no objection to my speaking to them, that they are generally papists. I do not know how other people are disposed; but, for my part, I hate no man for his religion; I look upon a papist as my countryman and neighbour, though I happen myself to be a protestant. And, if I know what advice is good for him, I can see no reason why I should not give it him, or why he should not take it.

A papist has sense, I suppose, like other men, to see his interest and advantage; and the same natural desire to embrace it where he finds it; and, if I can show him where it lies, he will not, I believe, kick it from him, barely to spite me as a protestant.

I have nothing to say to the popish gentry of this kingdom. They would hardly take such a plain man's advice; and, besides, they have so many ways of coming off safe themselves, though the poor people were undone, that I need not be concerned for them.

My care is for the common people, the labourers, farmers, artificers, and tradesmen, of this nation; who are in danger of being deluded by their betters, and made tools of to serve their purposes, without any advantage to themselves. It is possible, that, among the lords and squires, one perhaps of a hundred would get something by a change: places and employments will be promised them, no doubt; and a few of those promises, perhaps, the French and Scotch friends of the pretender might give him leave to keep. But what are the poorer sort the better all this while? Will the labourer get one farthing a day more? Will the farmer's rent be lowered? Will the artificer be more employed, or better paid? Will the tradesman get more customers, or have fewer scores upon his books?

I have been bred in a careful way of life; and never ventured upon any project, without consulting my pillow first how much I should be a gainer in the upshot. I wish my good countrymen would do so too; and, before they grow fond of change, ask themselves this sober question, Whether it would better their condition if it were really brought about? If it would not, to what purpose do we wish it? If the poor labourer, when all is over, is to be a labourer still, and earn his groat a day as hardly as he did before; I cannot find why he should think it worth his while to venture a leg or an arm, and the gallows too into the bargain, to be just where he set out. If he must dig

and delve when the pretender is settled on the throne, he had as good stick to it now, for any difference I can see.

I believe, my countrymen are not so mad as to imagine the pretender can, or will, give every one of them estates; and I am sure, if he does not, they can be only where they were. If a farmer must pay his rent, I see no reason that he should be much concerned whether he pays it to one man or to another. His popish landlord will, I suppose demand it as soon and as strictly as a protestant; and, if he does not pay it, pound his cattle, or distrain his goods, as readily at least.

I have not observed that tenants to popish landlords wear tighter clothes, ride better cattle, or spend more money at markets and fairs, than the tenants on protestant estates; therefore I cannot believe they are better used: on the contrary, I know, from long experience, that there is more money taken in my shop from the latter than the former; and therefore I suppose that, generally speaking, they are in better circumstances. I could wish all of them had better bargains; but, since they will not be mended by the best success that their own hearts could wish to the pretender, they may as well be quiet, and make the best of such as they have already.

There is not a more foolish trade than fighting for nothing; and I hope my good countrymen will be too wise to be persuaded into it. Fine speeches and fair promises will not be wanting, to delude them; but let them remember the warning I now give them, that, when all is over, the very best that can befall them is, to have their labour for their pains.

I doubt not but you are told, “that you will all be made;” and I do not expect that you should take my word to the contrary. I desire only, that you would trust the understanding God has given you, and not be fooled out of your senses. Will the manufacturer be made, by an entire stop to business? or the tradesman, by being obliged to shut up shop? And yet you all must know, that, in a civil war, no work can be carried on, nor any trade go forward. I hope you are not yet so stupid as to think, that people will build houses, buy rich furniture, or make up fine clothes, when we are all together by the ears, and nobody can tell to whose share they will fall at last. And if there be no buyers, you can have no employers. Merchants will not stock themselves with goods when there is no demand for them, to have their shops rifled, and their storehouses broken open and plundered, by one side or the other.

Indeed, my good friends and countrymen, let designing people say what they please, you will all be ruined in the struggle, let it end which way it will; and it well deserves your thoughts, whether it is worth your while to beggar yourselves and families, that the man’s name upon the throne may be James instead of George. You will probably see neither of them while you live, nor be one penny the richer for the one or for the other; and, if you take my advice, you will accordingly not trouble your heads about them.

You may think it a fine thing, when you get drunk over your ale, to throw up your caps and cry, “Long live king James!” but it would be a wiser thing, to think how you will live yourselves, after you are beggared in his cause. Will he make good your losses? pay one man for the plundering of his warehouse, and another for the rifling of his shop? Will he give you money, think ye, to release your own and your wives’ clothes which you must pawn for bread, because no work is stirring? Will he buy new looms and tackle for you, because yours have been burnt and destroyed? If you fancy so, you are strangely imposed upon indeed. He will have other things to do with his money; or, if he had any to spare, there will be hungry Frenchmen enough about him to snap it up before it comes to you.

I will not say any thing to you about the dangers you must run in the course of a civil war, though they are very dreadful, and more horrid than you can possibly imagine, because I cannot think that there is any need of it. I have shown you very plainly, that, if you should be deluded to take arms, you fight for less than nothing, for the undoing of yourselves and families; and if this argument will not prevail upon you to be quiet, I can only pray for you, that God will be pleased to restore you to the right use of your understandings. I am,

Your old and faithful friend,
THE DRAPIER.

Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman (1774)



THE 1901 TEXT

Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield was a statesman, diplomat, man of letters and an acclaimed wit. He was born in London to Philip Stanhope, 3rd Earl of Chesterfield and Lady Elizabeth Savile. Following the death of his mother when he was thirteen, Philip was raised mainly by his grandmother, the Marchioness of Halifax. Educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, he left just over a year into his studies, after focusing on languages and oration. He subsequently embarked on the Grand Tour to complete his education as a nobleman, by exposure to the cultural legacies of Classical antiquity and the Renaissance, and to become acquainted with his aristocratic counterparts and the polite society of Continental Europe.

Upon his father's death in 1726, he became the 4th Earl of Chesterfield and assumed his seat in the House of Lords. His inclination towards oration, often viewed as ineffective in the House of Commons due to its polish and lack of force, was met with appreciation in the House of Lords, and won many to his side. In 1728, in service to the new King George II, Chesterfield was sent to the Hague as ambassador, when his gentle tact and linguistic dexterity served him well. As a reward for his diplomatic service, Chesterfield received the Order of the Garter, the position of Lord Steward and the friendship of Robert Walpole, the *de facto* head of the government. While a British envoy in the Hague, he helped negotiate the second Treaty of Vienna, signalling the collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance and the beginning of the Anglo-Austrian Alliance.

In 1732, Madelina Elizabeth du Bouchet, a French governess, gave birth to his illegitimate son, Philip Stanhope, for whom Chesterfield wrote his now celebrated *Letters to his Son*. By the end of that year, ill health and financial troubles had caused Chesterfield's return to Britain and his resignation as ambassador. The following year, he married Melusina von der Schulenberg, the Countess of Walsingham, who was the illegitimate daughter of George I and Melusine von der Schulenburg, Duchess of Kendal. After recuperating from his illness, Chesterfield resumed his seat in the House of Lords, where he was now one of the acknowledged leaders. He supported the ministry and leadership of Robert Walpole, but withheld the blind fealty that Walpole preferred of his followers.

Despite the great pains he took to educate his illegitimate son, using his influence to obtain various diplomatic appointments for what he hoped would be a high-flying career, Stanhope was treated with disdain by many. He was a Member of Parliament for Liskeard and St Germans. The government in 1764 wished to get possession of his seat and asked him to vacate it; after some negotiation he agreed on receiving a payment of £1,000, which was half the amount that he (or his father) had paid for it. He was also successively Resident at Hamburg (1752-59) and Envoy Extraordinary to the Diet of Ratisbon, (1763) and on 3 April 1764, he was finally appointed to the Court of Dresden, Saxony.

Although an accomplished essayist and epigrammatist in his time, Chesterfield's literary reputation today derives almost entirely from *Letters to His Son*, as well as *Letters to His Godson* (1890), which are in fact works of private correspondence and paternal and avuncular advice that Chesterfield never intended for publication. Philip

Stanhope had never lived up to the high demands of his father to adopt the habits and graces he insisted were essential to succeed in life. His father issued repeated threats that unless he did as he was told he would lose his father's love, and if he were not to succeed in life it would be his own fault.

Philip did not rise as expected in the diplomatic services, preferring instead an unpretentious domestic life. He had met his wife, Eugenia Peters, in Rome in the spring of 1750 while on the Grand Tour. Two years his senior, she was described by one observer as "plain almost to ugliness" but possessing "the most careful education and all the choicest accomplishments of her sex". Stanhope and Eugenia's two sons, Charles and Philip, were born in London in 1761 and 1763 respectively, and it was not until 25 September 1767 that he and Eugenia were married in Dresden. Often in ill health, Philip died of dropsy in St. Gervais, France, on 16 November 1768, aged only thirty-six. It was generally believed that only after the death of his beloved son that Chesterfield learned of the existence of Philip's wife and children. He received them kindly and took upon himself the cost of education and maintenance of his grandsons and became very attached to them.

When Chesterfield died in 1773, his will caused much gossip. He provided for the two grandsons with £100 annuity each, as well as £10,000, but he left Eugenia nothing. Faced with the problem of supporting herself, she sold Chesterfield's letters to the publisher J. Dodsley for 1500 guineas. As Chesterfield had never intended them for publication, this resulted in great controversy due to their perceived "immorality", ensuring several reprints and a steady sale of copies for at least a century. Eugenia died at her home in Limpsfield, Surrey, in 1783, by which time she had acquired property and a comfortable fortune.

The volume comprises a thirty-year correspondence in more than 400 letters. Started in 1737 and continuing until the death of Philip Stanhope in 1768, Chesterfield wrote mostly instructive communications about geography, history and classical literature, with later letters focusing on politics and diplomacy. The letters were written in French, English and Latin to refine his son's grasp of languages. As a handbook for worldly success in the eighteenth century, *Letters to His Son* provides unique, perceptive and nuanced advice for how a gentleman should interpret the social codes of etiquette and good manner. Chesterfield's friend and literary rival Samuel Johnson famously said of the letters that "they teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master" as a means for getting on in the world, implying that Chesterfield promoted good manners as a method of advancement, rather than because of their inherent moral value.



Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield by William Hoare

L E T T E R S

WRITTEN BY

THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE
PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE,
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD,

TO

H I S S O N,
PHILIP STANHOPE, Esq;

LATE ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AT THE COURT OF DRESDEN :

TOGETHER WITH

SEVERAL OTHER PIECES
ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

PUBLISHED BY

Mrs. EUGENIA STANHOPE,

FROM THE ORIGINALS NOW IN HER POSSESSION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L . I.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. DODSLEY in PALL-MALL.

M.DCC.LXXIV.

The first edition's title page

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PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

*From a painting by M. Hoare, in the Possession of
Solomon Dayrolles Esq.*

The original frontispiece



Philip Stanhope (1732-1768), Chesterfield's beloved illegitimate son, painted in a miniature by John Smart, 1764

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