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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne
Burroughs Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Curtis Homer Tolstoy Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato
Potter Zola Lawrence Stevenson Dickens Harte
Kant Freud Jowett Andersen London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
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**Letters to His Son on the Art of
Becoming a Man of the World and
a Gentleman, 1756-58**

Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield

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LETTERS TO HIS SON

1756-58

By the EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

on the Fine Art of becoming a

MAN OF THE WORLD

And

A GENTLEMAN

LETTER CCIII

BATH, November 15, 1756

MY DEAR FRIEND: I received yours yesterday morning together with the Prussian, papers, which I have read with great attention. If courts could blush, those of Vienna and Dresden ought, to have their falsehoods so publicly, and so undeniably exposed. The former will, I presume, next year, employ an hundred thousand men, to answer the accusation; and if the Empress of the two Russias is pleased to argue in the same cogent manner, their logic will be too strong for all the King of Prussia's rhetoric. I well remember the treaty so often referred to in those pieces, between the two Empresses, in 1746. The King was strongly pressed by the Empress Queen to accede to it. Wassenaer communicated it to me for that purpose. I asked him if there were no secret articles; suspecting that there were some, because the ostensible treaty was a mere harmless, defensive one. He assured me that there were none. Upon which I told him, that as the King had already defensive alliances with those two Empresses, I did not see of what use his accession to this treaty, if merely a defensive one, could be, either to himself or the other contracting parties; but that, however, if it was only desired as an indication of the King's good will, I would give him an act by which his Majesty should accede to that treaty, as far, but no further, as at present he stood engaged to the respective Empresses by the defensive alliances subsisting with each. This offer by no means satisfied him; which was a plain proof of the secret articles now brought to light, and into which the court of Vienna hoped to draw us. I told Wassenaer so, and after that I heard no more of his invitation.

I am still bewildered in the changes at Court, of which I find that all the particulars are not yet fixed. Who would have thought, a year ago, that Mr. Fox, the Chancellor, and the Duke of Newcastle, should all three have quitted together? Nor can I yet account for it; explain it to me if you can. I cannot see, neither, what the Duke of Devonshire and Fox, whom I looked upon as intimately united, can have quarreled about, with relation to the Treasury; inform me, if you know. I never doubted of the prudent versatility of your Vicar

of Bray: But I am surprised at O'Brien Windham's going out of the Treasury, where I should have thought that the interest of his brother-in-law, George Grenville, would have kept him.

Having found myself rather worse, these two or three last days, I was obliged to take some ipecacuanha last night; and, what you will think odd, for a vomit, I brought it all up again in about an hour, to my great satisfaction and emolument, which is seldom the case in restitutions.

You did well to go to the Duke of Newcastle, who, I suppose, will have no more levees; however, go from time to time, and leave your name at his door, for you have obligations to him. Adieu.

LETTER CCIV

BATH, December 14, 1756.

MY DEAR FRIEND: What can I say to you from this place, where EVERY DAY IS STILL BUT AS THE FIRST, though by no means so agreeably passed, as Anthony describes his to have been? The same nothings succeed one another every day with me, as, regularly and uniformly as the hours of the day. You will think this tiresome, and so it is; but how can I help it? Cut off from society by my deafness, and dispirited by my ill health, where could I be better? You will say, perhaps, where could you be worse? Only in prison, or the galleys, I confess. However, I see a period to my stay here; and I have fixed, in my own mind, a time for my return to London; not invited there by either politics or pleasures, to both which I am equally a stranger, but merely to be at home; which, after all, according to the vulgar saying, is home, be it ever so homely.

The political settlement, as it is called, is, I find, by no means settled; Mr. Fox, who took this place in his way to his brother's, where he intended to pass a month, was stopped short by an express, which he received from his connection, to come to town immediately; and accordingly he set out from hence very early, two days ago. I had a very long conversation with him, in which he was, seemingly at least, very frank and communicative; but still I own myself in the dark. In those matters, as in most others, half knowledge (and mine is at most that) is more apt to lead one into error, than to carry one to truth; and our own vanity contributes to the seduction. Our conjectures pass upon us for truths; we will know what we do not know, and often, what we cannot know: so mortifying to our pride is the bare suspicion of ignorance!

It has been reported here that the Empress of Russia is dying; this would be a fortunate event indeed for the King of Prussia, and necessarily produce the neutrality and inaction, at least, of that great power; which would be a heavy weight taken out of the opposite scale to the King of Prussia. The 'Augustissima' must, in that case,

do all herself; for though France will, no doubt, promise largely, it will, I believe, perform but scantily; as it desires no better than that the different powers of Germany should tear one another to pieces.

I hope you frequent all the courts: a man should make his face familiar there. Long habit produces favor insensibly; and acquaintance often does more than friendship, in that climate where 'les beaux sentimens' are not the natural growth.

Adieu! I am going to the ball, to save my eyes from reading, and my mind from thinking.

LETTERS TO HIS SON

LETTER CCV

BATH, January 12, 1757

MY DEAR FRIEND: I waited quietly, to see when either your leisure, or your inclinations, would allow you to honor me with a letter; and at last I received one this morning, very near a fortnight after you went from hence. You will say, that you had no news to write me; and that probably may be true; but, without news, one has always something to say to those with whom one desires to have anything to do.

Your observation is very just with regard to the King of Prussia, whom the most august House of Austria would most unquestionably have poisoned a century or two ago. But now that 'terras Astraea reliquit', kings and princes die of natural deaths; even war is pusillanimously carried on in this degenerate age; quarter is given; towns are taken, and the people spared: even in a storm, a woman can hardly hope for the benefit of a rape. Whereas (such was the humanity of former days) prisoners were killed by thousands in cold blood, and the generous victors spared neither man, woman, nor child. Heroic actions of this kind were performed at the taking of Magdebourg. The King of Prussia is certainly now in a situation that must soon decide his fate, and make him Caesar or nothing. Notwithstanding the march of the Russians, his great danger, in my mind, lies westward. I have no great notions of Apraxin's abilities, and I believe many a Prussian colonel would out-general him. But Brown, Piccolomini, Lucchese, and many other veteran officers in the Austrian troops, are respectable enemies.

Mr. Pitt seems to me to have almost as many enemies to encounter as his Prussian Majesty. The late Ministry, and the Duke's party, will, I presume, unite against him and his Tory friends; and then quarrel among themselves again. His best, if not his only chance of supporting himself would be, if he had credit enough in the city, to

hinder the advancing of the money to any administration but his own; and I have met with some people here who think that he has.

I have put off my journey from hence for a week, but no longer. I find I still gain some strength and some flesh here, and therefore I will not cut while the run is for me.

By a letter which I received this morning from Lady Allen, I observe that you are extremely well with her; and it is well for you to be so, for she is an excellent and warm puff.

'A propos' (an expression which is commonly used to introduce whatever is unrelative to it) you should apply to some of Lord Holderness's people, for the perusal of Mr. Cope's letters. It would not be refused you; and the sooner you have them the better. I do not mean them as models for your manner of writing, but as outlines of the matter you are to write upon.

If you have not read Hume's "Essays" read them; they are four very small volumes; I have just finished, and am extremely pleased with them. He thinks impartially, deep, often new; and, in my mind, commonly just. Adieu.

LETTER CCVI

BLACKHEATH, September 17, 1757

MY DEAR FRIEND: Lord Holderness has been so kind as to communicate to me all the letters which he has received from you hitherto, dated the 15th, 19th, 23d, and 26th August; and also a draught of that which he wrote to you the 9th instant. I am very well pleased with all your letters; and, what is better, I can tell you that the King is so too; and he said, but three days ago, to Monsieur Munchausen, HE (meaning you) SETS OUT VERY WELL, AND I LIKE HIS LETTERS; PROVIDED THAT, LIKE MOST OF MY ENGLISH MINISTERS ABROAD, HE DOES NOT GROW IDLE HERE-AFTER. So that here is both praise to flatter, and a hint to warn you. What Lord Holderness recommends to you, being by the King's order, intimates also a degree of approbation; for the BLACKER INK, AND THE LARGER CHARACTER, show, that his Majesty, whose eyes are grown weaker, intends to read all your letters himself. Therefore, pray do not neglect to get the blackest ink you can; and to make your secretary enlarge his hand, though 'd'ailleurs' it is a very good one.

Had I been to wish an advantageous situation for you, and a good debut in it, I could not have wished you either better than both have hitherto proved. The rest will depend entirely upon yourself; and I own I begin to have much better hopes than I had; for I know, by my own experience, that the more one works, the more willing one is to work. We are all, more or less, 'des animaux d'habitude'. I remember very well, that when I was in business, I wrote four or five hours together every day, more willingly than I should now half an hour; and this is most certain, that when a man has applied himself to business half the day, the other half, goes off the more cheerfully and agreeably. This I found so sensibly, when I was at The Hague, that I never tasted company so well nor was so good company myself, as at the suppers of my post days. I take Hamburg now to be 'le centre du refuge Allemand'. If you have any Hanover 'refugies' among them, pray take care to be particularly attentive to them.

How do you like your house? Is it a convenient one? Have the 'Casserolles' been employed in it yet? You will find 'les petits soupers fins' less expensive, and turn to better account, than large dinners for great companies.

I hope you have written to the Duke of Newcastle; I take it for granted that you have to all your brother ministers of the northern department. For God's sake be diligent, alert, active, and indefatigable in your business. You want nothing but labor and industry to be, one day, whatever you please, in your own way.

We think and talk of nothing here but Brest, which is universally supposed to be the object of our great expedition. A great and important object it is. I suppose the affair must be brusque, or it will not do. If we succeed, it will make France put some water to its wine. As for my own private opinion, I own I rather wish than hope success. However, should our expedition fail, 'Magnis tamen excidit ausis', and that will be better than our late languid manner of making war.

To mention a person to you whom I am very indifferent about, I mean myself, I vegetate still just as I did when we parted; but I think I begin to be sensible of the autumn of the year; as well as of the autumn of my own life. I feel an internal awkwardness, which, in about three weeks, I shall carry with me to the Bath, where I hope to get rid of it, as I did last year. The best cordial I could take, would be to hear, from time to time, of your industry and diligence; for in that case I should consequently hear of your success. Remember your own motto, 'Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia'. Nothing is truer. Yours.

LETTER CCVII

BLACKHEATH, September 23, 1757

MY DEAR FRIEND: I received but the day before yesterday your letter of the 3d, from the headquarters at Selsingen; and, by the way, it is but the second that I have received from you since your arrival at Hamburg. Whatever was the cause of your going to the army, I approve of the effect; for I would have you, as much as possible, see everything that is to be seen. That is the true useful knowledge, which informs and improves us when we are young, and amuses us and others when we are old; 'Olim haec meminisse juvabit'. I could wish that you would (but I know you will not) enter in a book, a short note only, of whatever you see or hear, that is very remarkable: I do not mean a German ALBUM stuffed with people's names, and Latin sentences; but I mean such a book, as, if you do not keep now, thirty years hence you would give a great deal of money to have kept. 'A propos de bottes', for I am told he always wears his; was his Royal Highness very gracious to you, or not? I have my doubts about it. The neutrality which he has concluded with Marechal de Richelieu, will prevent that bloody battle which you expected; but what the King of Prussia will say to it is another point. He was our only ally; at present, probably we have not one in the world. If the King of Prussia can get at Monsieur de Soubize's, and the Imperial army, before other troops have joined them, I think he will beat them but what then? He has three hundred thousand men to encounter afterward. He must submit; but he may say with truth, 'Si Pergama dextra defendi potuissent'. The late action between the Prussians and Russians has only thinned the human species, without giving either party a victory; which is plain by each party's claiming it. Upon my word, our species will pay very dear for the quarrels and ambition of a few, and those by no means the most valuable part of it. If the many were wiser than they are, the few must be quieter, and would perhaps be juster and better than they are.

Hamburg, I find, swarms with Grafs, Graffins, Fursts, and Furst-ins, Hocheits, and Durchlaughteits. I am glad of it, for you must necessarily be in the midst of them; and I am still more glad, that, being in the midst of them, you must necessarily be under some constraint of ceremony; a thing which you do not love, but which is, however, very useful.

I desired you in my last, and I repeat it again in this, to give me an account of your private and domestic life.

How do you pass your evenings? Have they, at Hamburg, what are called at Paris 'des Maisons', where one goes without ceremony, sups or not, as one pleases? Are you adopted in any society? Have you any rational brother ministers, and which? What sort of things are your operas? In the tender, I doubt they do not excel; for 'mein lieber schatz', and the other tendernesses of the Teutonic language, would, in my mind, sound but indifferently, set to soft music; for the bravura parts, I have a great opinion of them; and 'das, der donner dich erschlage', must no doubt, make a tremendously fine piece of 'recitativo', when uttered by an angry hero, to the rumble of a whole orchestra, including drums, trumpets, and French horns. Tell me your whole allotment of the day, in which I hope four hours, at least, are sacred to writing; the others cannot be better employed than in LIBERAL pleasures. In short, give me a full account of yourself, in your un-ministerial character, your incognito, without your 'fiocchi'. I love to see those, in whom I interest myself, in their undress, rather than in gala; I know them better so. I recommend to you, 'etiam atque etiam', method and order in everything you undertake. Do you observe it in your accounts? If you do not, you will be a beggar, though you were to receive the appointments of a Spanish Ambassador extraordinary, which are a thousand pistoles a month; and in your ministerial business, if you have no regular and stated hours for such and such parts of it, you will be in the hurry and confusion of the Duke of N— —, doing everything by halves, and nothing well, nor soon. I suppose you 'have been feasted through the Corps diplomatique at Hamburg, excepting Monsieur Champeaux; with whom, however, I hope you live 'poliment et galamment', at all third places.

Lord Loudon is much blamed here for his 'retraite des dix milles', for it is said that he had above that number, and might consequently have acted offensively, instead of retreating; especially as his retreat was contrary to the unanimous opinion (as it is now said) of the council of war. In our Ministry, I suppose, things go pretty quietly, for the D. of N. has not plagued me these two months. When his Royal Highness comes over, which I take it for granted he will do very soon, the great push will, I presume, be made at his Grace and Mr. Pitt; but without effect if they agree, as it is visibly their interest to do; and, in that case, their parliamentary strength will support them against all attacks. You may remember, I said at first, that the popularity would soon be on the side of those who opposed the popular Militia Bill; and now it appears so with a vengeance, in almost every county in England, by the tumults and insurrections of the people, who swear that they will not be enlisted. That silly scheme must therefore be dropped, as quietly as may be. Now that I have told you all that I know, and almost all that I think, I wish you a good supper and a good-night.

LETTER CCVIII

BLACKHEATH, September 30, 1757

MY DEAR FRIEND: I have so little to do, that I am surprised how I can find time to write to you so often. Do not stare at the seeming paradox; for it is an undoubted truth, that the less one has to do, the less time one finds to do it in. One yawns, one procrastinates, one can do it when one will, and therefore one seldom does it at all; whereas those who have a great deal of business, must (to use a vulgar expression) buckle to it; and then they always find time enough to do it in. I hope your own experience has by this time convinced you of this truth.

I received your last of the 8th. It is now quite over with a very great man, who will still be a very great man, though a very unfortunate one. He has qualities of the mind that put him above the reach of these misfortunes; and if reduced, as perhaps he may, to the 'marche' of Brandenburg, he will always find in himself the comfort, and with all the world the credit, of a philosopher, a legislator, a patron, and a professor of arts and sciences. He will only lose the fame of a conqueror; a cruel fame, that arises from the destruction of the human species. Could it be any satisfaction to him to know, I could tell him, that he is at this time the most popular man in this kingdom; the whole nation being enraged at that neutrality which hastens and completes his ruin. Between you and me, the King was not less enraged at it himself, when he saw the terms of it; and it affected his health more than all that had happened before. Indeed it seems to me a voluntary concession of the very worst that could have happened in the worst event. We now begin to think that our great and secret expedition is intended for Martinico and St. Domingo; if that be true, and we succeed in the attempt, we shall recover, and the French lose, one of the most valuable branches of commerce—I mean sugar. The French now supply all the foreign markets in Europe with that commodity; we only supply ourselves with it. This would make us some amends for our ill luck, or ill conduct in North America; where Lord Loudon, with twelve

thousand men, thought himself no match for the French with but seven; and Admiral Holborne, with seventeen ships of the line, declined attacking the French, because they had eighteen, and a greater weight of METAL, according to the new sea-phrase, which was unknown to Blake. I hear that letters have been sent to both with very severe reprimands. I am told, and I believe it is true, that we are negotiating with the Corsican, I will not say rebels, but asserters of their natural rights; to receive them, and whatever form of government they think fit to establish, under our protection, upon condition of their delivering up to us Port Ajaccio; which may be made so strong and so good a one, as to be a full equivalent for the loss of Port Mahon. This is, in my mind, a very good scheme; for though the Corsicans are a parcel of cruel and perfidious rascals, they will in this case be tied down to us by their own interest and their own danger; a solid security with knaves, though none with fools. His Royal Highness the Duke is hourly expected here: his arrival will make some bustle; for I believe it is certain that he is resolved to make a push at the Duke of N., Pitt and Co.; but it will be ineffectual, if they continue to agree, as, to my CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE, they do at present. This parliament is theirs, 'caetera quis nescit'?

Now that I have told you all that I know or have heard, of public matters, let us talk of private ones that more nearly and immediately concern us. Admit me to your fire-side, in your little room; and as you would converse with me there, write to me for the future from thence. Are you completely 'nippe' yet? Have you formed what the world calls connections? that is, a certain number of acquaintances whom, from accident or choice, you frequent more than others: Have you either fine or well-bred women there? 'Y a-t-il quelque bon ton'? All fat and fair, I presume; too proud and too cold to make advances, but, at the same time, too well-bred and too warm to reject them, when made by 'un honnete homme avec des manieres'.

Mr. — — is to be married, in about a month, to Miss — — —. I am very glad of it; for, as he will never be a man of the world, but will always lead a domestic and retired life, she seems to have been made on purpose for him. Her natural turn is as grave and domestic as his; and she seems to have been kept by her aunts 'a la grace', instead of being raised in a hot bed, as most young ladies are of late.