

**THE BEST LETTERS OF LORD
CHESTERFIELD:
LETTERS TO HIS SON AND
LETTERS TO HIS GODSON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649073108

The Best Letters of Lord Chesterfield: Letters to His Son and Letters to His Godson by Philip Dormer Stanhope & Edward Gilpin Johnson

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PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE & EDWARD GILPIN JOHNSON

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THE BEST LETTERS
OF
LORD CHESTERFIELD

Letters to his Son
AND
Letters to his Godson

By PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

Edited with an Introduction
By EDWARD GILPIN JOHNSON



CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY
1899

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In applying himself to the formation of his son as a *polite man* in society, Lord Chesterfield has not given us a treatise on *duty* as Cicero has; but he has left letters which, by their mixture of justness and lightness, by certain lightsome airs which insensibly mingle with the serious graces, preserve the medium between the *Mémoires du Chevalier de Grammont* and *Télémaque*.

SAINTE-BEUVE.

Viewed as compositions, they appear almost unrivalled for a serious epistolary style.

LORD MAHON.

INTRODUCTION.

IN summarizing the character of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, Lecky the historian describes him as a man of "delicate but fastidious taste," "low moral principle," and "hard, keen, and worldly wisdom;" and this estimate, with an undue stress upon "low moral principle," fairly expresses the conventional idea of the brilliant eighteenth century statesman and wit. It may be said of Lord Chesterfield — and it is a rather uncommon thing to say of one of his countrymen — that his reputation has suffered more from his preaching than from his practice. Weighed fairly in the balance with his contemporaries and co-equals, he loses in great measure the invidious distinction usually bestowed upon him; and those conversant with his philosophy will readily conjecture that had he intended his preaching for the morally-sensitive ear of the British public, he would have more carefully observed his own organic maxim, — "*Le Grand Art, et le plus necessaire de tous, c'est L'Art de Plaire.*"

Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son were written in the closest confidence, with no thought to their