

and swimmings in the head, always proceed from some foulness of the stomach. However, upon the whole, I am very glad that your old complaint has not mixed itself with this, which I am fully convinced arises singly from your own negligence. Adieu!

I am sorry for Monsieur Kurzé,<sup>1</sup> upon his sister's account.

No. 1876  
TO HIS SON  
(*Stanhope CCXCVIII*)

*London, 15 January 1753*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I never think my time so well employed, as when I think it employed to your advantage. You have long had the greatest share of it; you now engross it. The moment is now decisive; the piece is now going to be exhibited to the public; the mere outlines, and the general colouring, are not sufficient to attract the eyes, and to secure applause; but the last finishing, artful, and delicate strokes; are necessary. Skilful judges will discern, and acknowledge their merit; the ignorant will, without knowing why, feel their power. In that view, I have thrown together, for your use, the enclosed maxims, or, to speak more properly, observations on men and things; for I have no merit as to the invention; I am no system-monger; and, instead of giving way to my imagination, I have only consulted my memory; and my conclusions are all drawn from facts, not fancy. Most maxim-mongers have preferred the prettiness to the justness of a thought, and the turn to the truth; but I have refused myself to everything that my own experience did not justify and confirm. I wish you would consider them seriously, and separately, and recur to them again *pro re nata* in similar cases. Young men are as apt to think them-

<sup>1</sup>A brother, probably, of Madame de Monconseil, née Curzay.

selves wise enough, as drunken men are to think themselves sober enough. They look upon spirit to be a much better thing than experience; which they call coldness. They are but half mistaken; for though spirit, without experience, is dangerous, experience, without spirit, is languid and defective. Their union, which is very rare, is perfection; you may join them, if you please, for all my experience is at your service, and I do not desire one grain of your spirit in return. Use them both; and let them reciprocally animate and check each other. I mean here, by the spirit of youth, only the vivacity and presumption of youth; which hinder them from seeing the difficulties or dangers of an undertaking; but I do not mean what the silly vulgar call spirit, by which they are captious, jealous of their rank, suspicious of being undervalued, and tart (as they call it) in their repartees, upon the slightest occasions. This is an evil and a very silly spirit which should be driven out and transferred to a herd of swine. This is not the spirit of a man of fashion, who has kept good company. People of an ordinary low education, when they happen to fall into good company, imagine themselves the only object of its attention; if the company whispers, it is, to be sure, concerning them; if they laugh, it is at them, and if anything ambiguous, and by the most forced interpretation can be applied to them, happens to be said, they are convinced that it was meant at them; upon which they grow out of countenance first, and then angry. This mistake is very well ridiculed in the 'Stratagem,'<sup>1</sup> where Scrub says, '*I am sure they talked of me, for they laughed consumedly.*' A well-bred man seldom thinks, but never seems to think, himself slighted, undervalued, or laughed at in company, unless where it is so plainly marked out, that his honour obliges him to resent it in a proper manner; *mais les honnêtes gens ne se boudent jamais*. I will admit, that it is very difficult to command oneself enough to behave with ease, frankness, and good-breeding towards

<sup>1</sup>Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*, Act. III. i.

those, who one knows dislike, slight, and injure one as far as they can without personal consequences; but I assert, that it is absolutely necessary to do it; you must embrace the man you hate, if you cannot be justified in knocking him down; for otherwise you avow the injury, which you cannot revenge. A prudent cuckold (and there are many such at Paris) pockets his horns, when he cannot gore with them; and will not add to the triumph of his maker, by only butting with them ineffectually. A seeming ignorance is very often a most necessary part of worldly knowledge. It is, for instance, commonly advisable to seem ignorant of what people offer to tell you; and, when they say, Have you not heard of such a thing? to answer, No, and to let them go on, though you know it already. Some have a pleasure in telling it, because they think that they tell it well; others have a pride in it, as being the sagacious discoverers; and many have a vanity in showing that they have been, though very undeservedly, trusted; all these would be disappointed, and consequently displeased, if you said, Yes. Seem always ignorant (unless to one most intimate friend) of all matters of private scandal and defamation, though you should hear them a thousand times; for the parties affected always look upon the receiver to be almost as bad as the thief; and whenever they become the topic of conversation, seem to be a sceptic, though you are really a serious believer; and always take the extenuating part.

But all this seeming ignorance should be joined to thorough and extensive private informations; and, indeed, it is the best method of procuring them; for most people have such a vanity, in showing a superiority over others, though but for a moment, and in the merest trifles, that they will tell you what they should not, rather than not show that they can tell what you did not know; besides that, such seeming ignorance will make you pass for incurious, and consequently undesigning. However, fish for facts, and take pains to be well informed of everything that passes;

but fish judiciously, and not always, nor indeed often, in the shape of direct questions; which always put people upon their guard, and, often repeated, grow tiresome. But sometimes take the things that you would know for granted; upon which somebody will, kindly and officiously, set you right; sometimes say, that you have heard so and so; and at other times seem to know more than you do, in order to know all that you want; but avoid direct questioning as much as you can. All these necessary arts of the world require constant attention, presence of mind, and coolness. Achilles, though invulnerable, never went to battle but completely armed. Courts are to be the theatres of your wars, where you should be always as completely armed, and even with the addition of a heel-piece. The least inattention, the least *distraction*, may prove fatal. I would fain see you what pedants call *omnis homo*, and what Pope much better calls *all-accomplished*; you have the means in your power, add the will, and you may bring it about. The vulgar have a coarse saying, of *spoiling a hog for a halfpenny worth of tar*; prevent the application, by providing the tar; it is very easily to be had, in comparison with what you have already got.

The fine Mrs. Pitt, who, it seems, saw you often at Paris, speaking of you the other day, said, in French, for she speaks little English,— . . .<sup>1</sup> Whether it is that you did not pay the homage due to her beauty, or that it did not strike you as it does others, I cannot determine; but I hope she had some other reason than truth for saying it. I will suppose that you did not care a pin for her; but, however, she surely deserved a degree of propitiatory adoration from you, which I am afraid you neglected. Had I been in your case, I should have endeavoured, at least, to have supplanted Mr. Mackay in his office of nocturnal reader to her. I played at cards, two days ago, with your friend Mrs. Fitzgerald, and her most sublime mother, Mrs. Seagrave; they both

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Stanhope suppressed what Mrs. Pitt said.

inquired after you; and Mrs. Fitzgerald said, she hoped you went on with your dancing; I said, Yes, and that you assured me, you had made such considerable improvements in it, that you had now learned to stand still, and even upright. Your *virtuosa*, la Signora Vestri, sang here the other day, with great applause; I presume you are intimately acquainted with her merit. Good night to you, whoever you pass it with.

I have this moment received a packet, sealed with your seal, though not directed by your hand, for Lady Hervey. No letter from you! Are you not well?

MAXIMS:

ENCLOSED IN LETTER OF 15th JANUARY 1753

(*Stanhope CCCCXXXIV*)

A proper secrecy is the only mystery of able men: mystery is the only secrecy of weak and cunning ones.

A man who tells nothing, or who tells all, will equally have nothing told him.

If a fool knows a secret, he tells it because he is a fool; if a knave knows one, he tells it wherever it is his interest to tell it. But women and young men are very apt to tell what secrets they know, from the vanity of having been trusted. Trust none of these whenever you can help it.

Inattention to the present business, be it what it will; the doing one thing and thinking at the same time of another, or the attempting to do two things at once, are the never-failing signs of a little frivolous mind.

A man who cannot command his temper, his attention, and his countenance, should not think of being a man of business. The weakest man in the world can avail himself of the passion of the wisest. The inattentive man cannot know the business, and consequently cannot do it. And he

1998

who cannot command his countenance, may e'en as well tell his thoughts as show them.

Distrust all those who love you extremely upon a very slight acquaintance, and without any visible reason. Be upon your guard, too, against those who confess as their weaknesses all the cardinal virtues.

In your friendships and in your enmities let your confidence and your hostilities have certain bounds: make not the former dangerous, nor the latter irreconcilable. There are strange vicissitudes in business!

Smooth your way to the head through the heart. The way of reason is a good one; but it is commonly something longer, and perhaps not so sure.

Spirit is now a very fashionable word: to act with spirit, to speak with spirit, means only to act rashly and to talk indiscreetly. An able man shows his spirit by gentle words and resolute actions; he is neither hot nor timid.

When a man of sense happens to be in that disagreeable situation, in which he is obliged to ask himself more than once, *What shall I do?* he will answer himself, Nothing. When his reason points out to him no good way, or at least no one way less bad than another, he will stop short and wait for light. A little busy mind runs on at all events, must be doing, and, like a blind horse, fears no dangers because he sees none. *Il faut savoir s'ennuyer.*

Patience is a most necessary qualification for business; many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request. One must seem to hear the unreasonable demands of the petulant unmoved, and the tedious details of the dull untired. That is the least price that a man must pay for a high station.

It is always right to detect a fraud, and to perceive a folly; but it is often very wrong to expose either. A man of business should always have his eyes open, but must often seem to have them shut.

In Courts, nobody should be below your management