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To the HONOURABLE  
*Sir* WILLIAM ELLYS,  
B A R O N E T.

S I R,



ERE it merely for the Pomp, or the Protection of an Honourable Name, that I take the Liberty of prefixing Yours before this Work, those purposes of doing it had been abundantly answered. But I confess an Ambition higher than either of These, and design this Address, as a means to know a Person more intimately, whose Character creates Honour and Respect in all that are acquainted with it. An Ambition excusable

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able



## The Epistle Dedicatory.

able at least, in One whose Happiness it is, to have some sort of Pretension to be gratified in a Desire, which he cannot but entertain and indulge.

Where Providence confers the External Advantages of Life only, the Greater and most valuable part is still behind. Very few are more than half-blest; and of Them who are, or call themselves unhappy, the Generality are miserable, not from real Want of what they need, but from an Incapacity of enjoying what they have. Hence it is still accounted a Moot-point in Philosophy, whether Prosperity or Adversity, Plenty or Penury, require greater management and address. \* One of some Name, we know, among those Sages durst not so much as trust himself with the Temptation of Riches. You, Sir, very justly reproach his behaviour with Rashness and Folly, by shewing, that not the Sea, but a Soul large and diffusive as the Sea rather, is necessary to deliver a man from the danger of a plentiful Fortune. This does not only secure, but render Him and It a publick Blessing, by Acts of Goodness, Munificence, Hospitality; By cultivating those Social Virtues whereby Mankind are sustained, cemented, endeared to one another, and all those important and beneficial Ends accomplished, to which the *Giver of these Good Gifts* designs they should be serviceable.

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\* *Grates.*

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

The Difficulties, under which most Men miscarry, are not avoided by abandoning the World, but by using it in so masterly a manner, as always to keep above it. Ambition and Avarice sometimes inhabit the most retired Cloisters; and are (no doubt) sometimes too absolute Strangers to Quality, and Business, and Fortune. Every one is valuable in proportion as he is Useful; but Useful They can be but very little, who industriously decline the occasions of being so. The Man of Conversation and Civil Society is therefore that Pattern of Wisdom, designed and drawn by this Author. And to the same purpose, all perfect Systems of Morality enlarge upon the different Capacities of Men; because the Offices resulting from thence make the chief part of Christian, as well as Human Prudence. These are the Talents peculiar to each person, and his proper Business distinct from the rest of the World.

Now, Sir, when *Charron* accordingly treats of The true and genuine Use of Riches, of a Mind capable of Stemming a full tide of Plenty; of the Integrity of Magistrates in Distribution of Justice, of the Fidelity and Vigilance of Wise and Worthy Patriots in the Service of their Country, and Defence of its just Rights; of the Tenderness and Prudence of Parents, and the affectionate Deference and Duty of Children; when, I say, These and other Descriptions passed through my hands, there needed

but

*The Epistle Dedicatory:*

but little reflection, to bring to a Relation's remembrance, a very eminent Instance of these several Civil and Domestick Virtues.

Be pleased therefore, Sir, to assert your own Excellencies: And what Your Example already recommends to the World, proceed yet more to enforce, by accepting a Treatise intended to draw Men to these Resemblances of Your self, as an Argument of that respect, with which I am,

*S I R,*

*Your most Obedient, Humble Servant,*

**George Stanhope.**

**T O**

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

**H**AVING in the former Book explained and insisted upon the several Methods, by which Man may be let into a competent knowledge of Himself, and the Condition of Humane Nature; which is the first part of our Undertaking, and a very proper Introduction to Wisdom: The next thing in order, is to enter upon the Doctrines and Precepts of Wisdom it self. Now That shall be done in this Second Book, by laying down some General Rules and Directions, reserving for the business of our Third and Last, those that are more Particular, and appropriated to special Persons and Circumstances, according to which their Duties vary in proportion to their respective Conditions. It was a very necessary Preamble in the mean while, to call Mens thoughts home, and fix them upon themselves; to exhort and instruct them to handle, probe, and nicely to examine their Nature; that so being thus brought to a tolerable knowledge and sense of their Infirmities and Defects, and sadly convinced of the miserable Condition they are by nature in, they may be put into a better Capacity of having those healing and wholesome Remedies applied, which are necessary, in order to their Recovery and Amendment. And these Remedies are no other than the Instructions and Exhortations, proper for the attaining true Wisdom.

But alas! It is a prodigious, and a melancholy thing to consider, how stupid and regardless Mankind are of their Happiness and Amendment. What a strange Temper is it for a Man, not to be at all solicitous, to have the very Errand and Business he was sent into the World about, well done? Every body is infinitely fond and covetous of Living, but scarce any body is concerned, or takes any manner of Thought, for Living as becomes him. This is the very Art which should be our Chief, our only Study; and yet it is that which we are least Masters of, least disposed to learn. Our Inclinations, and Designs, our Studies, and Endeavours are (as Experience daily shews) vastly different, even from our very Cradles, or as soon as we began to be capable of any. They vary according to the Temper and Constitution of our Bodies, the Company we keep, the Education we are instituted by, the infinite Accidents and Occasions of our Lives; but still none of us casts his Eyes that way, none makes it his Endeavour to manage these to the best Advantage, none attempts heartily to improve in Wisdom; nay, we do not at all lay this most necessary Matter to heart, we scarce allow it so much as a single Thought. Or if at any time it comes in our way, accidentally, and by the by; we hear and attend to it, just as we would to a Tale that is told; or a piece of News, that in no degree concerns us. The Discourse perhaps is pleasant and entertaining to some (and but to some neither, for many will not endure, nor give it a patient bearing) but even those who are contented, nay delighted to hear it, yet hear to very little purpose. The words and sound tickle their Senses, and that's all they do. For as to the thing it self, That makes no impression, gains no esteem, kindles no desires, at least in this so universally Corrupt, and Degenerate Age of ours. In order to the being made duly sensible of the true worth of Wisdom, and how much it deserves from us, there seems to be some particular Turn in our first Frame, some Original Aptitude and Air in our Nature

Nature and Complexion. If Men must take pains, they will much more willingly employ their time, and exert their Strength and Parts in the pursuit of Things, whose Effects are gay, and glittering, external and sensible, such as Ambition, and Avarice, and Passion, propose to them; But as for Wisdom, whose Fruits are silent and gentle, internal, and unseen, it hath no Attractives at all for them. O wretched Men! what false Measures do we take, and how fatally are we deluded? We prefer Winds and Storms for the sake of their Noise, where there is nothing but Air and Emptiness, before Body and solid Substance, which is calm and still; Opinion and Reputation, before Truth and Real Merit. Surely Man (as was said in the First Book) is no better than Vanity and Misery, when so averse from, so incapable of Wisdom. Every Man is tainted with the Air which he breathes and dwells in, goes in the beaten Road, and lives like his Neighbours; and when this is made a Rule, how can it be expected he should take another Course? We follow the Track, and hunt by the Scent; nay we urge our own Vices upon other People, we are eager and warm in propagating them; we dissemble our Passions, dress and trick them up, and then put them upon our Companions. None calls after us to stop our Career; we are not to expect it. We are all out of the way, and likely never to correct our Error, without the special favour of Heaven, and a great and generous strength and firmness of Nature at the same time, discerning enough to observe the common Error in which all are intangled, but scarce any are sensible of it; daring enough, to be singular in minding that which no body else minds; and hardy and resolute enough to judge and to live in a method quite different from the rest of the World.

There have been indeed, some, though very few such brave Men: I see them still, their Memories and Names are sweet to this day; and I smell their Ashes like a rich Perfume, with incredible Admiration and Delight. But what

what hath been the effect of this uncommon Judgment? and how have they behaved themselves with it? Truly they are for the most Democritus, or Heraclitus revived. Some see the Errors and Follies of Mankind, and when they have done, they only make a Jest of them; They divert and entertain themselves and others, by a Comical Representation of a very Tragical thing; as if no more were necessary to teach Men Truth and Virtue, than merely to expose Falshood and Vice. They laugh at the World; and the World is but too ridiculous; but while they make themselves merry and good Company, they quite forget to be good-natur'd and charitable. Others are feeble and poor-spirited, they mince the matter, and dare not speak out; they soften and disguise their Language, mingle and sweeten their Propositions to render them palatable, and make men swallow them before they are aware, and in a Mass of other things, where they shall not taste, or scarce ever be sensible of them.

They do not speak home, distinctly and fully; but express themselves, like the Oracles of old, in Terms ambiguous, and subject to Evasions. I, for my part, come long after them both in Time, and Merit; but I am blunt and downright, and deliver my sense plainly and clearly. I give an Idea of Wisdom, and Instructions for attaining it, such as the World perhaps hath not been used to; and I shall not be surpris'd, if the newness of my Matter and Method expose this little Tract to the Censures of such Persons, as have neither Temper, nor Ability to judge calmly and maturely of the Matter, but accustom themselves to condemn and run down every thing which does not hit their Humour, or agree with the Notions they have imbibed already. But who can help that, or secure himself from their Censures and Displeasure? Let Them take their course; I question not in the mean while, but the meek and tractable, and honestly disposed, and likewise the Sublime and Celestial Spirits will pass an equitable construction upon my Writings. These two Extremes  
are



other Three regard him as a Member of Society, and extend to others as well as himself; which are, 1. A Due observance of Laws, and Customs, and Ceremonies; 2. A modest and obliging Conversation with others; and 3. Prudence in the management of all kind of Business.

The Fourth is made up of the Fruits, and good Effects of Wisdom, which are Two, 1. The being constantly fit, and in a readines to die; and 2. The maintaining a true and uninterrupted Tranquility of Spirit; which is indeed the Crown and Glory of Wisdom, and the very Supreme Good and Happiness, of which Humane Nature is Capable. These taken all together make Twelve Points in the whole, and each being allowed a distinct Consideration by it self, this Book will accordingly contain just so many Chapters.

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THE TREATISE  
OF  
WISDOM.

Three BOOKS.

The Author's Preface.

Wherein the Title, the Subject Matter, the Design, and the Method of this Treatise are explained.

**B**Efore we enter upon the Book it self, it is requisite the Reader should be well informed what he is to understand by that Wisdom, which is the Name, the Subject, and the End of it; and after what manner it is intended to be treated of in the following Sheets.

Now every one at the very first hearing, understands by Wisdom some particular and uncommon Accomplishment, whereby a Man is distinguish'd and set above the Vulgar, by a greater Ability, and more masterly Readiness, whether in Good or Evil. For tho' there be not the same Propriety indeed in the Expression,  
a when

## The PREFACE.

when converted to the worse Sense; yet it is used either way, and the Scripture it self makes mention of some Persons Wise to do Evil. Thus then it does not by any means import a really Good and Commendable Quality of the Mind, but in general any sort of Knowledge or Skill, exquisite in the Degree, be the Object and Employment of it what it will. In this Sense a Tyrant, or a Pyrate, or a Robber, may have this Title apply'd to him; no less than a King, or a Pilot, or a Captain; because all we intend by it is only Prudence, and Conduct, and a perfect Understanding in the business of his Profession. Hence it comes to pass, that Folly is opposed to Wisdom, not only as it denotes Extravagance and Vice, but in general any sort of Indiscretion, or meanness of Attainments. For Wisdom gives us an Idea of something extraordinary and lofty in its kind; as the contrary does of somewhat little, and low, and short of the common Pitch. Take Wisdom in a Good or a Bad Sense, Two Things are manifestly included in it; first, A Sufficiency of Mind, which implies its being furnished with all things necessary for its purpose; and, Secondly, The Excellency or more than common measure of that Provision; for to give a Man right to this Denomination, it is no less necessary that he should enjoy these Qualities in a great and eminent degree. Thus you see the largest and most vulgar Notion of Wisdom, according to which Men commonly tell you; that Wise Men are very scarce; that they who are such, have a Right to direct and preside over Others;