

A SHOWY BINDING

Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773)
to Philip Stanhope (1732–1768), his son

London, 3 April 1747

If I am rightly informed, I am now writing to a fine gentleman in a scarlet coat laced with gold, a brocade waistcoat, and all other suitable ornaments. The natural partiality of every author for his own works makes me very glad to hear that Mr. Harte has thought this last edition of mine worth so fine a binding; and as he has bound it in red and gilt it upon the back, I hope he will take care that it shall be lettered too. A showish binding attracts the eyes, and engages the attention of everybody—but with this difference, that women, and men who are like women, mind the binding more than the book; whereas men of sense and learning immediately examine the inside, and if they find that it does not answer the finery on the outside, they throw it by with the greater indignation and contempt. I hope that when this edition of my works shall be opened and read, the best judges will find connection, consistency, solidity, and spirit in it. Mr. Harte may *recensere* and *emendare* as much as he pleases; but it will be to little purpose, if you do not co-operate with him. The work will be imperfect....

I like your account of the salt-works, which shows that you gave some attention while you were seeing them. But notwithstanding that by your account the Swiss salt is (I dare say) very good, yet I am apt to suspect that it falls a little short of the true Attic salt, in which there was a peculiar quickness and delicacy. That same Attic salt seasoned almost all Greece except Bœotia; and a great deal of it was exported afterwards to Rome, where it was counterfeited by a composition called Urbanity, which in some time was brought to very near the perfection of the original Attic salt. The more you are powdered with these two kinds of salt, the better you will keep and the more you will be relished.