

On the Education of Children

Plutarch

Translation by Oliver J. Thatcher

¹ THE COURSE that ought to be taken for the training of freeborn children, and the means whereby their manners may be rendered virtuous, will, with the reader's leave, be the subject of our present disquisition.

² In the management of which, perhaps it may be expedient to take our rise from their very procreation. I would therefore, in the first place, advise those who desire to become the parents of famous and eminent children, that they keep not company with all women that they light on; I mean such as harlots, or concubines. For such children as are blemished in their birth, either by the father's or the mother's side, are liable to be pursued, as long as they live, with the indelible infamy of their base extraction, as that which offers a ready occasion to all that desire to take hold of it of reproaching and disgracing them therewith.

*Misfortune on that family's entailed,
Whose reputation in its founder failed.*

Wherefore, since to be well-born gives men a good stock of confidence, the consideration thereof ought to be of no small value to such as desire to leave behind them a lawful issue. For the spirits of men who are alloyed and counterfeit in their birth are naturally enfeebled and debased; as rightly said the poet again---

*A bold and daring spirit is oft daunted,
When with the guilt of parents' crimes 'tis haunted.*

So, on the contrary, a certain loftiness and natural gallantry of spirit is wont to fill the breasts of those who are born of illustrious parents. Of which Diaphantus, the young son of Themistocles, is a notable instance; for he is reported to have made his boast often and in many companies, that whatsoever pleased him pleased also all Athens; for whatever he liked, his mother liked; and whatever his mother liked, Themistocles liked; and whatever Themistocles liked, all the Athenians liked. Wherefore it was gallantly done of the Lacedaemonian states, when they laid a round fine on their king Archidamus for marrying a little woman, giving this reason for their so doing: that he meant to beget for them not kings, but kinglings.

³ The advice which I am, in the next place, about to give, is, indeed, no other than what has been given by those who have undertaken this argument before me. You will ask me what is that? It is this: that no man keep company with his wife for issue's sake but when he is sober, having drunk either no wine, or at least not such a quantity as to distemper him; for they usually prove wine-bibbers and drunkards,

whose parents begot them when they were drunk. Wherefore Diogenes said to a stripling somewhat crack-brained and half-witted: Surely, young man, your father begot you when he was drunk. Let this suffice to be spoken concerning the procreation of children; and let us pass thence to their education.

⁴ And here, to speak summarily, what we are wont to say of arts and sciences may be said also concerning virtue: that there is a concurrence of three things requisite to the completing them in practice---which are nature, reason and use. Now by reason here I would be understood to mean learning; and by use, exercise. Now the principles come from instruction, the practice comes from exercise, and perfection from all three combined. And accordingly as either of the three is deficient, virtue must needs be defective. For if virtue is not improved by instruction, it is blind; if instruction is not assisted by nature it is maimed; and if exercise fail of the assistance of both, it is imperfect as to the attainment of its end. And as in husbandry it is first requisite that the soil be fertile, next that the husbandman be skillful, and lastly that the seed he sows be good; so here nature resembles the soil, the instructor of youth the husbandman, and the rational principles and precepts which are taught, the seed. And I would peremptorily affirm that all these met and jointly conspired to the completing of the souls of those universally celebrated men, Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, together with all others whose eminent worth has begotten them immortal glory. And happy is that man certainly, and well-beloved of the Gods, on whom by the bounty of any of them all these are conferred.

And yet if any one thinks that those in whom Nature has not thoroughly done her part may not in some measure make up her defects, if they be so happy as to light upon good teaching, and withal apply their own industry towards the attainment of virtue, he is to know that he is very much, nay, altogether, mistaken. For as a good natural capacity may be impaired by slothfulness, so dull and heavy natural parts may be improved by instruction; and whereas negligent students arrive not at the capacity of understanding the most easy things, those who are industrious conquer the greatest difficulties. And many instances we may observe, that give us a clear demonstration of the mighty force and successful efficacy of labor and industry. For water continually dropping will wear out hard rocks hollow; yes, iron and brass are worn out with constant handling. Nor can we, if we would, reduce the felloes of a cart-wheel to their formed straightness, when once they have been bent by force; yes, it is above the power of force to straighten the bended staves sometimes used by actors upon the stage. So far is that which labor effects, though against nature, more potent than what is produced according to it. Yes, have we not many millions of instances more which evidence the force of industry? Let us see in some few that follow. A man's ground is of itself good; yet, if it be not manured, it will contract barrenness; and the better it was naturally, so much the more is it ruined by carelessness, if it be ill-husbanded. On the other side, let a man's ground be more than ordinarily rough and rugged; yet experience tells us that, if it be well manured, it will be quickly made capable of bearing excellent fruit. Yes, what sort of tree is there which will not, if neglected, grow crooked and unfruitful; and what but will, if rightly ordered, prove faithful and bring its fruit to maturity? What

strength of body is there which will not lose its vigor and fall to decay by laziness, nice usage, and debauchery? And, on the contrary, where is the man of never so crazy a natural constitution, who can not render himself far more robust, if he will only give himself to exercise activity and strength? What horse well-managed from a colt proves not easily governable by the rider? And where is there one to be found which, if not broken betimes, proves not stiff-necked and unmanageable? Yes, why need we wonder at anything else when we see the wildest beasts made tame and brought to hand by industry? And lastly, as to men themselves, that Thessalian answered not amiss, who, being asked which of his countrymen were the meekest, replied: Those that have received their discharge from the wars.

But what need of multiplying more words in this matter, when even the notion of the word ἦθος [or moral character] in the Greek language imports continuance [ἔθος or habit], and he that should call moral virtues [ἠθικάς] customary virtues [ἀρετὰς ἠθικάς] would seem to speak not incongruously? I shall conclude this part of my discourse, therefore, with the addition of one only instance. Lycurgus, the Lacedaemonian lawgiver, once took two whelps of the same litter, and ordered them to be bred in quite a different manner; whereby one became dainty and ravenous, and the other of a good scent and skilled in hunting; which done, a while after he took occasion thence in an assembly of the Lacedaemonians to discourse in this manner: Of great weight in the attainment of virtue, fellow-citizens, are habits, instruction, precepts, and indeed the whole manner of life---as I will presently let you see by example. And, withal, he ordered the producing those two whelps into the midst of the hall, where also there were set down before them a plate and a live hare. Whereupon, as they had been bred, the one presently flies upon the hare, and the other as greedily runs to the plate. And while the people were musing, not perfectly apprehending what he meant by producing those whelps thus, he added: These whelps were both of one litter, but differently bred; the one, you see, has turned out a greedy cur, and the other a good hound. And this shall suffice to be spoken concerning custom and different ways of living.

⁵ The next thing that falls under our consideration is the nursing of children, which, in my judgment, the mothers should do themselves, giving their own breast to those they have borne. For this office will certainly be performed with more tenderness and carefulness by natural mothers, who will love their children intimately, as the saying is, from their tender nails. Whereas, both wet and dry nurses, who are hired, love only for their pay, and are affected to their work as ordinarily those that are substituted and deputed in the place of others are. Yes, even Nature seems to have assigned the suckling and nursing of the issue to those that bear them: for which cause she has bestowed upon every living creature that brings forth young milk to nourish them. And, in conformity thereto, Providence has only wisely ordered that women should have two breasts, that so, if any of them should happen to bear twins, they might have two several springs of nourishment ready for them. Though, if they had not that furniture, mothers would still be more kind and loving to their own children. And that not without reason; for constant feeding together is a great means to heighten the affection mutually betwixt any persons. Yes, even beasts, when they are separated from those that have grazed

with them, do in their way show a longing for the absent. Wherefore, as I have said, mothers themselves should strive to the utmost to nurse their own children.

But if they find it impossible to do it themselves, either because of bodily weakness (and such a case may fall out), or because they are apt to be quickly with child again, then are they to choose the most honest nurses they can get, and not to take whomsoever they have offered them. And the first thing to be looked after in this choice is, that the nurse be bred after the Greek fashion. For as it is needful that the members of children be shaped aright as soon as they are born, that they may not afterwards prove crooked and distorted, so it is no less expedient that their manners be well-fashioned from the very beginning. For childhood is a tender thing, and easily wrought into any shape. Yes, and the very souls of children readily receive the impressions of those things that are dropped into them while they are yet but soft; but when they grow older, they will, as all hard things are, be more difficult to be wrought upon. And as soft wax is apt to take the stamp of the seal, so are the minds of children to receive the instructions imprinted on them at that age. Whence, also, it seems to me good advice which divine Plato gives to nurses, not to tell all sorts of common tales to children in infancy, lest thereby their minds should chance to be filled with foolish and corrupt notions. The like good counsel Phocylides, the poet, seems to give in this verse of his:

*If we'll have virtuous children, we should choose
Their tenderest age good principles to infuse.*

⁶ Nor are we to omit taking due care, in the first place, that those children who are appointed to attend upon such young nurslings, and to be bred with them for play-fellows, be well-mannered, and next that they speak plain, natural Greek; lest, being constantly used to converse with persons of a barbarous language and evil manners, they receive corrupt tinctures from them. For it is a true proverb, that if you live with a lame man, you will learn to halt.

⁷ Next, when a child is arrived at such an age as to be put under the care of pedagogues, great care is to be used that we be not deceived in them, and so commit our children to slaves or barbarians or cheating fellows. For it is a course never enough to be laughed at which many men nowadays take in this affair; for if any of their servants be better than the rest, they dispose some of them to follow husbandry, some to navigation, some to merchandise, some to be stewards in their houses, and some, lastly, to put out their money to use for them. But if they find any slave that is a drunkard or a glutton, and unfit for any other business, to him they assign the government of their children; whereas, a good pedagogue ought to be such a one in his disposition as Phoenix, tutor to Achilles, was.

And now I come to speak of that which is a greater matter, and of more concern than any that I have said. We are to look after such masters for our children as are blameless in their lives, not justly reprovably for their manners, and of the best experience in teaching. For the very spring and root of honesty and virtue lies in the felicity of lighting on good education. And as husbandmen are wont to set forks to prop up feeble plants, so do honest schoolmasters prop up youth by careful

instructions and admonitions, that they may duly bring forth the buds of good manners. But there are certain fathers nowadays who deserve that men should spit on them in contempt, who, before making any proof of those to whom they design to commit the teaching of their children, either through unacquaintance, or, as it sometimes falls out, through unskillfulness, intrust them to men of no good reputation, or, it may be, such as are branded with infamy. Although they are not altogether so ridiculous, if they offend herein through unskillfulness; but it is a thing most extremely absurd, when, as oftentimes it happens, though they know they are told beforehand, by those who understand better than themselves, both of the inability and rascality of certain schoolmasters, they nevertheless commit the charge of their children to them, sometimes overcome by their fair and flattering speeches, and sometimes prevailed on to gratify friends who entreat them. This is an error of like nature with that of the sick man, who, to please his friends, forbears to send for the physician that might save his life by his skill, and employs a mountebank that quickly dispatches him out of the world; or of his who refuses a skillful shipmaster, and then, at his friend's entreaty, commits the care of his vessel to one that is therein much his inferior. In the name of Jupiter and all the gods, tell me how can that man deserve the name of a father, who is more concerned to gratify others in their requests, than to have his children well educated? Or, is it not rather fitly applicable to this case, which Socrates, that ancient philosopher, was wont to say---that, if he could get up to the highest place in the city, he would lift up his voice and make this proclamation thence: What mean you, fellow-citizens, that you thus turn every stone to scrape wealth together, and take so little care of your children, to whom, one day, you must relinquish it all?"---to which I would add this, that such parents do like him that is solicitous about his shoe, but neglects the foot that is to wear it. And yet many fathers there are, who so love their money and hate their children, that, lest it should cost them more than they are willing to spare to hire a good schoolmaster for them, they rather choose such persons to instruct their children as they are worth; thereby beating down the market, that they may purchase ignorance cheap. It was, therefore, a witty and handsome jeer which Aristippus bestowed on a sottish father, who asked him what he would take to teach his child. He answered, A thousand drachmas. When the other cried out: Oh, Hercules, what a price you ask! for I can buy a slave at that rate. Do so, then, said the philosopher, and you shall have two slaves instead of one---your son for one, and him you buy for another. Lastly, how absurd it is, when you accustom your children to take their food with their right hands, and chide them if they receive it with their left, yet you take no care at all that the principles that are infused into them be right and regular.

And now I will tell you what ordinarily is like to befall such prodigious parents, when they have their sons ill-nursed and worse-taught. For when such sons are arrived at man's estate, and, through contempt of a sound and orderly way of living, precipitate themselves into all manner of disorderly and servile pleasures, then will those parents dearly repent of their own neglect of their children's education, when it is too late to amend; and vex themselves, even to distraction, at their vicious courses. For then do some of those children acquaint themselves with flatterers and parasites, a sort of infamous and execrable persons, the very pests

that corrupt and ruin young men; others waste their substance; others, again, come to shipwreck on gaming and reveling. And some venture on still more audacious crimes, committing adultery and joining in the orgies of Bacchus, being ready to purchase one bout of debauched pleasure at the price of their lives. If now they had but conversed with some philosopher, they would never have enslaved themselves to such courses as these; though possibly they might have learned at least to put in practice the precepts of Diogenes, delivered by him indeed in rude language, but yet containing, as to the scope of it, a great truth, when he advised a young man to go to the public stews, that he might then inform himself, by experience, how things of great value and things of no value at all were there of equal worth.

⁸ In brief therefore I say (and what I say may justly challenge the repute of an oracle rather than of advice), that the one chief thing in that matter---which comprises the beginning, middle and end of all---is good education and regular instruction; and that these two afford great help and assistance toward the attainment of virtue and felicity. For all other good things are but human and of small value, such as will hardly recompense the industry required to the getting of them. It is, indeed, a desirable thing to be well-descended; but the glory belongs to our ancestors. Riches are valuable; but they are the goods of Fortune, who frequently takes them from those that have them, and carries them to those that never so much as hoped for them. Yes, the greater they are, the fairer mark they are for those to aim at who design to make our bags their prize; I mean evil servants and accusers. But the weightiest consideration of all is, that riches may be enjoyed by the worst as well as the best of men. Glory is a thing deserving respect, but unstable; beauty is a prize that men fight to obtain, but, when obtained, it is of little continuance; health is a precious enjoyment, but easily impaired; strength is a thing desirable, but apt to be the prey of disease and old age. And, in general, let any man who values himself upon strength of body know that he makes a great mistake; for what indeed is any proportion of human strength, if compared to that of other animals, such as elephants and bulls and lions? But learning [παιδεία] alone, of all things in our possession, is immortal and divine. And two things there are that are most peculiar to human nature, reason and speech [νοῦς καὶ λόγος]; of which two, reason is the master of speech, and speech is the servant of reason, impregnable against all assaults of fortune, not to be taken away by false accusation, nor impaired by sickness, nor enfeebled by old age. For reason alone grows youthful by age; and time, which decays all other things before it carries them away with it, leaves learning alone behind. Whence the answer seems to me very remarkable, which Stilpo, a philosopher of Megara, gave to Demetrius, who, when he leveled that city to the ground and made the citizens slaves, asked Stilpo whether he had lost anything. Nothing, he said, for war cannot plunder virtue. To this saying that of Socrates also is very agreeable; who, when Gorgias (as I take it) asked him what his opinion was of the king of Persia, and whether he judged him happy, returned answer, that he could not tell what to think of him, because he knew not how he was furnished with virtue and learning---as judging human felicity to consist in those endowments, and not in those which are subject to fortune.

9 Moreover, as it is my advice to parents that they make the breeding up of their children to learning their chief care, so I here add, that the learning they ought to train them up unto should be sound and wholesome, and such as is most remote from those trifles which suit the popular humor. For to please the many is to displease the wise. To this saying to mine Euripides himself bears witness:

*I'm better skilled to treat a few, my peers,
Than in a crowd to tickle vulgar ears;
Though others have the luck on't, when they babble
Most to the wise, then most to please the rabble.*

Besides, I find by my own observation, that those persons who make it their business to speak so as to deserve the favor and approbation of the scum of the people, ordinarily live at a suitable rate, voluptuously and intemperately. And there is reason for it. For they who have no regard to what is honest, so they may make provision for other men's pleasures, will surely not be very propense to prefer what is right and wholesome before that which gratifies their own inordinate pleasures and luxurious inclinations, and to quit that which humors them for that which restrains them.

If any one ask what the next thing is wherein I would have children instructed, and to what further good qualities I would have them insured, I answer, that I think it advisable that they neither speak nor do anything rashly; for, according to the proverb, the best things are the most difficult. But extemporary discourses are full of much ordinary and loose stuff, nor do such speakers well know where to begin or where to make an end. And besides other faults which those who speak suddenly are commonly guilty of, they are commonly liable to this great one, that they multiply words without measure; whereas, premeditation will not suffer a man to enlarge his discourse beyond a due proportion. To this purpose it is reported of Pericles, that, being often called upon by the people to speak, he would not, because (as he said) he was unprepared. And Demosthenes also, who imitated him in the management of public affairs, when the Athenians urged him to give his counsel, refused it with this answer: I have not yet prepared myself. Though it may be that this story is a mere fiction, brought down to us by uncertain tradition, without any credible author. But Demosthenes, in his oration against Midias, clearly sets forth the usefulness of premeditation. For there he says: I confess, O Athenians! that I came here provided to speak: and I will by no means deny that I have spent my utmost study upon the composing this oration. For it had been a pitiful omission in me, if, having suffered and still suffering such things, I should have neglected that which in this cause was to be spoken by me. But here I would not be understood altogether to condemn all readiness to discourse extempore, nor yet to allow the use of it upon such occasions as do not require it; but we are to use it only as we do physic.

Still, before a person arrives at complete manhood, I would not permit him to speak upon any sudden incident occasion; though, after he has attained a radicated faculty of speaking, he may allow himself a greater liberty, as opportunity is offered. For as they who have been a long time in chains, when they are at last set at liberty,

are unable to walk, on account of their former continual restraint, and are very apt to trip, so they who have been used to a fettered way of speaking a great while, if upon any occasion they be enforced to speak on a sudden, will hardly be able to express themselves without some tokens of their former confinement. But to permit those that are yet children to speak extemporally is to give them occasion for extremely idle talk. A wretched painter, they say, showing Apelles a picture, told him withal that he had taken a very little time to paint it. If you had not told me so, said Apelles, I see cause enough to believe it was a hasty draft; but I wonder that in that space of time you have not painted many more such pictures.

I advise therefore (for I return now to the subject that I have digressed from) the shunning and avoiding, not merely of a starched, theatrical, and over-tragedial form of speaking, but also of that which is too low and mean. For that which is too swelling is not fit for the management of public affairs; and that, on the other side, which is too thin is very inapt to work any notable impression upon the hearers. For as it is not only requisite that a man's body be healthy, but also that it be of a firm constitution, so ought a discourse to be not only sound, but nervous also. For though such as is composed cautiously may be commended, yet that is all it can arrive at; whereas that which has some adventurous passages in it is admired also. And my opinion is the same concerning the affections of the speaker's mind. For he must be neither of a too confident nor of a too mean and dejected spirit; for the one is apt to lead to impudence, the other to servility; and much of the orator's art, as well as great circumspection, is required to direct his course skillfully betwixt the two.

And now (whilst I am handling this point concerning the instruction of children) I will also give you my judgment concerning the frame of a discourse; which is this, that to compose it in all parts uniformly not only is a great argument of a defect in learning, but also is apt, I think, to nauseate the auditory when it is practiced; and in no case can it give lasting pleasure. For to sing the same tune, as the saying is, is in everything cloying and offensive; but men are generally pleased with variety, as in speeches and pageants, so in all other entertainments.

¹⁰ Wherefore, though we ought not to permit an ingenious child entirely to neglect any of the common sorts of learning, so far as they may be gotten by lectures or from public shows; yet I would have him to salute these only as in his passage, taking a bare taste of each of them (seeing no man can possibly attain to perfection in all), and to give philosophy the pre-eminence of them all. I can illustrate my meaning by an example. It is a fine thing to sail around and visit many cities, but it is profitable to fix our dwelling in the best. Witty also was the saying of Bias, the philosopher, that, as the wooers of Penelope, when they could not have their desire of the mistress, contented themselves to have to do with her maids, so commonly those students who are not capable of understanding philosophy waste themselves in the study of those sciences that are of no value. Whence it follows, that we ought to make philosophy the chief of all our learning. For though, in order to the welfare of the body, the industry of men has found out two arts---medicine, which assists to the recovery of lost health, and gymnastics, which help us to attain a sound constitution---yet there is but one remedy for the distempers and diseases of the mind, and that is philosophy. For by the advice and assistance thereof it is that we

come to understand what is honest, and what dishonest; what is just, and what unjust; in a word, what we are to seek, and what to avoid.

We learn by it how we are to demean ourselves towards the gods, towards our parents, our elders, the laws, strangers, governors, friends, wives, children, and servants. That is, we are to worship the gods, to honor our parents, to reverence our elders, to be subject to the laws, to obey our governors, to love our friends, to use sobriety towards our wives, to be affectionate to our children, and not to treat our servants insolently; and (which is the chief lesson of all) not to be overjoyed in prosperity nor too much dejected in adversity; not to be dissolute in our pleasures, nor in our anger to be transported with brutish rage and fury. These things I account the principal advantages which we gain by philosophy. For to use prosperity generously is the part of a man: to manage it so as to decline envy, of a well-governed man; to master our pleasures by reason is the property of wise men; and to moderate anger is the attainment only of extraordinary men. But those of all men I count most complete, who know how to mix and temper the management of civil affairs with philosophy; seeing they are thereby masters of two of the greatest good things that are---a life of public usefulness as statesmen, and a life of calm tranquility as students of philosophy. For, whereas there are three sorts of lives---the life of action, the life of contemplation, and the life of pleasure---the man who is utterly abandoned and a slave to pleasure is brutish and mean-spirited; he that spends his time in contemplation without action is an unprofitable man; and he that lives in action and is destitute of philosophy is a rustical man, and commits many absurdities. Wherefore we are to apply our utmost endeavor to enable ourselves for both; that is, to manage public employments, and withal, at convenient seasons, to give ourselves to philosophical studies. Such statesmen were Pericles and Archytas the Tarentine; such were Dion the Syracusan and Epaminondas the Theban, both of whom were of Plato's familiar acquaintance.

I think it not necessary to spend many more words about this point, the instruction of children in learning. Only it may be profitable at least, or even necessary, not to omit procuring for them the writings of ancient authors, but to make such a collection of them as husbandmen are wont to do of all needful tools. For of the same nature is the use of books to scholars, as being the tools and instruments of learning, and withal enabling them to derive knowledge from its proper fountains.

¹¹ In the next place, the exercise of the body must not be neglected; but children must be sent to schools of gymnastics, where they may have sufficient employment that way also. This will conduce partly to a more handsome carriage, and partly to the improvement of their strength. For the foundation of a vigorous old age is a good constitution of the body in childhood. Wherefore, as it is expedient to provide those things in fair weather which may be useful to the mariners in a storm, so is it to keep good order and govern ourselves by rules of temperance in youth, as the best provision we can lay in for age. Yet must they husband their strength, so as not to become dried up (as it were) and destitute of strength to follow their studies. For, according to Plato, sleep and weariness are enemies to the arts.

But why do I stand so long on these things? I hasten to speak of that which is of the greatest importance, even beyond all that has been spoken of; namely, I would have boys trained for the contests of wars by practice in the throwing of darts, shooting of arrows, and hunting of wild beasts. For we must remember in war the goods of the conquered are proposed as rewards to the conquerors. But war does not agree with a delicate habit of body, used only to the shade; for even one lean soldier that has been used to military exercises shall overthrow whole troops of mere wrestlers who know nothing of war. But, somebody may say, while you profess to give precepts for the education of all free-born children, why do you carry the matter so as to seem only to accommodate those precepts to the rich, and neglect to suit them also to the children of poor men and plebeians? To which objection it is no difficult thing to reply. For it is my desire that all children whatsoever may partake of the benefit of education alike; but if yet any persons, by reason of the narrowness of their estates, cannot make use of my precepts, let them not blame me that give them for Fortune, which disabled them from making the advantage by them they otherwise might. Though even poor men must use their utmost endeavor to give their children the best education; or, if they cannot, they must bestow upon them the best that their abilities will reach. Thus much I thought fit here to insert in the body of my discourse, that I might the better be enabled to annex what I have yet to add concerning the right training of children.

¹² I say now, that children are to be won to follow liberal studies by exhortations and rational motives, and on no account to be forced thereto by whipping or any other contumelious punishments. I will not argue that such usage seems to be more agreeable to slaves than to ingenuous children; and even slaves, when thus handled, are dulled and discouraged from the performance of their tasks, partly by reason of the smart of their stripes, and partly because of the disgrace thereby inflicted. But praise and reproof are more effectual upon free-born children than any such disgraceful handling; the former to incite them to what is good, and the latter to restrain them from that which is evil. But we must use reprehensions and commendations alternately, and of various kinds according to the occasion; so that when they grow petulant, they may be shamed by reprehension, and again, when they better deserve it, they may be encouraged by commendations. Wherein we ought to imitate nurses, who, when they have made their infants cry, stop their mouths with the nipple to quiet them again. It is also useful not to give them such large commendations as to puff them up with pride; for this is the ready way to fill them with a vain conceit of themselves, and to enfeeble their minds.

¹³ Moreover, I have seen some parents whose too much love to their children has occasioned, in truth, their not loving them at all. I will give light to this assertion by an example, to those who ask what it means. It is this: while they are over-hasty to advance their children in all sorts of learning beyond their equals, they set them too hard and laborious tasks, whereby they fall under discouragement; and this, with other inconveniences accompanying it, cause them in the issue to be ill affected to learning itself. For as plants by moderate watering are nourished, but with over-much moisture are glutted, so is the spirit improved by moderate labors, but

overwhelmed by such as are excessive. We ought therefore to give children some time to take breath from their constant labors, considering that all human life is divided betwixt business and relaxation. To which purpose it is that we are inclined by nature not only to wake, but to sleep also; that as we have sometimes wars, so likewise at other times peace; so some foul, so other fair days; and, as we have seasons of important business, so also the vacation times of festivals. And, to contract all in a word, rest is the sauce of labor. Nor is it thus in living creatures only, but in things inanimate too. For even in bows and harps, we loosen their strings, that we may bend and wind them up again. Yes, it is universally seen that, as the body is maintained by repletion and evacuation, so is the mind by employment and relaxation.

Those parents, moreover, are to be blamed who, when they have committed their sons to the care of pedagogues or schoolmasters, never see or hear them perform their tasks; wherein they fail much of their duty. For they ought, ever and again, after the intermission of some days, to make trial of their children's proficiency; and not intrust their hopes of them to the discretion of a hireling. For even that sort of men will take more care of the children, when they know that they are regularly to be called to account. And here the saying of the king's groom is very applicable, that nothing made the horse so fat as the king's eye.

But we must most of all exercise and keep in constant employment the memory of children; for that is, as it were, the storehouse of all learning. Wherefore the mythologists have made Mnemosyne, or Memory, the mother of the Muses, plainly intimating thereby that nothing does so beget or nourish learning as memory. Wherefore we must employ it to both those purposes, whether the children be naturally apt or backward to remember. For so shall we both strengthen it in those to whom Nature in this respect has been bountiful, and supply that to others wherein she has been deficient. And as the former sort of boys will thereby come to excel others, so will the latter sort excel themselves. For that of Hesiod was well said---

*Oft little add to little, and the account
Will swell: heapt atoms thus produce a mount.*

Neither, therefore, let the parents be ignorant of this, that the exercising of memory in the schools does not only give the greatest assistance towards the attainment of learning, but also to all the actions of life. For the remembrance of things past affords us examples in our consults about things to come.

¹⁴ Children ought to be made to abstain from speaking filthily, seeing, as Democritus said, words are but the shadows of actions. They are, moreover, to be instructed to be affable and courteous in discourse. For as churlish manners are always detestable, so children may be kept from being odious in conversation, if they will not be pertinaciously bent to maintain all they say in dispute. For it is of use to a man to understand not only how to overcome, but also how to give ground when to conquer would turn to his disadvantage. For there is such a thing sometimes as a Cadmean victory; which the wise Euripides attests, when he said---

*Where two discourse, if the one's anger rise,
The man who lets the contest fall is wise.*

Add we now to these things some others of which children ought to have no less, yes, rather greater care; to-wit, that they avoid luxurious living, bridle their tongues, subdue anger, and refrain their hands. Of how great moment each of these counsels is, I now come to inquire; and we may best judge of them by examples. To begin with the last: some men there have been, who, by opening their hands to take what they ought not, have lost all the honor they got in the former part of their lives. So Gylippus the Lacedaemonian, for unsewing the public money-bags, was condemned to banishment from Sparta. And to be able also to subdue anger is the part of a wise man. Such a one was Socrates; for when a hectoring and debauched young man rudely kicked him, so that those in his company, being sorely offended, were ready to run after him and call him to account for it, What, said he to them, if an ass had kicked me, would you think it handsomely done to kick him again? And yet the young man himself escaped not unpunished; for when all persons reproached him for so unworthy an act, and gave him the nickname of Laktistes, or the kicker, he hanged himself. The same Socrates---when Aristophanes, publishing his play which he called The Clouds, therein threw all sorts of the foulest reproaches upon him, and a friend of his, who was present at the acting of it, repeated to him what was there said in the same comical manner, asking him withal, Does not this offend you, Socrates?---replied: Not at all, for I can as well bear with a fool in a play as at a great feast. And something of the same nature is reported to have been done by Archytas of Tarentum and Plato. For Archytas, when, upon his return from the war, wherein he had been a general, informed that his land had been impaired by his bailiff's negligence, sent for him, and said only thus to him when he came: If I were not very angry with you, I would severely correct you. And Plato, being offended with a gluttonous and debauched servant, called to him Speusippus, his sister's son, and said to him: Go beat you, this fellow: for I am too much offended with him to do it myself.

These things, you will perhaps say, are very difficult to be imitated. I confess it; but yet we must endeavor to the utmost of our power, by setting such examples before us, to repress the extravagancy of our immoderate, furious anger. For neither are we able to rival the experience or virtue of such men in many other matters; but we do, nevertheless, as sacred interpreters of divine mysteries and priests of wisdom, strive to follow these examples, and, as it were, to enrich ourselves with what we can nibble from them.

And as to the bridling of the tongue, concerning which also I am obliged to speak, if any man think it a small matter or of mean concernment, he is much mistaken. For it is a point of wisdom to be silent when occasion requires, and better than to speak, though never so well. And, in my judgment, for this reason the ancients instituted mystical rites of initiation in religion, that, being in them accustomed to silence, we might thence transfer the fear we have of the gods to the fidelity required in human secrets. Yes, indeed, experience shows that no man ever repented of having kept silence; but many that they have not done so. And a man

may, when he will, easily utter what he has by silence concealed; but it is impossible for him to recall what he has once spoken. And, moreover, I can remember infinite examples that have been told me of those that have procured great damages to themselves by intemperance of the tongue: one or two of which I will give, omitting the rest. When Ptolemy Philadelphus had taken his sister Arsinöe to wife, Sotades for breaking an obscene jest upon him lay languishing in prison a great while; a punishment which he deserved for his unseasonable babbling, whereby to provoke laughter in others he purchased a long time of mourning to himself. Much after the same rate, or rather still worse, did Theocritus the Sophist both talk and suffer. For when Alexander commanded the Greeks to provide him a purple robe, wherein, upon his return from the wars, he meant to sacrifice to the Gods in gratitude for his victorious success against the barbarians, and the various states were bringing in the sums assessed upon them, Theocritus said: I now see clearly that this is what Homer calls purple death, which I never understood before. By which speech he made the king his enemy from that time forwards. The same person provoked Antigonus, the king of Macedon, to great wrath, by reproaching him with his defect, as having but one eye. Thus it was Antigonus commanded Eutropion, his master-cook (then in waiting), to go to this Theocritus and settle some accounts with him. And when he announced his errand to Theocritus, and called frequently about the business, the latter said: I know that you have a mind to dish me up raw to that Cyclops; thus reproaching at once the king with the want of his eye, and the cook with his employment. To which Eutropion replied: Then you shall lose your head, as the penalty of your loquacity and madness. And he was as good as his word; for he departed and informed the king, who sent and put Theocritus to death.

Besides all these things, we are to accustom children to speak the truth, and to account it, as indeed it is, a matter of religion for them to do so. For lying is a servile quality, deserving the hatred of all mankind; yes, a fault for which we ought not to forgive our meanest servants.

14 Thus far have I discoursed concerning the good-breeding of children, and the sobriety requisite to that age, without any hesitation or doubt in my own mind concerning any thing that I have said. But in what remains to be said, I am dubious and divided in my own thoughts, which, as if they were laid in a balance, sometimes incline this way, and sometimes that way. I am therefore loath to persuade or dissuade in the matter. But I must venture to answer one question, which is this: whether we ought to admit those that make love to our sons to keep them company, or whether we should not rather thrust them out of doors, and banish them from their society. For when I look upon those straightforward parents, of a harsh and austere temper, who think it an outrage not to be endured that their sons should have anything to say to lovers, I am tender of being the persuader or encourager of such a practice. But, on the other side, when I call to mind Socrates, and Plato, and Xenophon, and Aeschines, and Cebes, with a whole troop of other such men, who have approved those masculine loves, and still have brought up young men to learning, public employments, and virtuous living, I am again of another mind, and am much influenced by my zeal to imitate such great men. And the testimony also of Euripides is favorable to their opinion, when he says---

*Another love there is in mortals found;
The love of just and chaste and virtuous souls.*

And yet I think it not improper here to mention withal that saying of Plato, spoken betwixt jest and earnest, that men of great eminence must be allowed to show affection to what beautiful objects they please. I would decide then that parents are to keep off such as make beauty the object of their affection, and admit altogether such as direct the love to the soul; whence such loves are to be avoided as are in Thebes and Elis, and that sort which in Crete they call ravishment; and such are to be imitated as are in Athens and Sparta.

¹⁶ But in this matter let every man follow his own judgment. Thus far have I discoursed concerning the right ordering and decent carriage of children. I will now pass thence, to speak somewhat concerning the next age, that of youth [*i.e.* between 14 and 21]. For I have often blamed the evil custom of some, who commit their boys in childhood to pedagogues and teachers, and then suffer the impetuosity of their youth to range without restraint; whereas boys of that age need to be kept under a stricter guard than children. For who does not know that the errors of childhood are small, and perfectly capable of being amended; such as slighting their pedagogues, or disobedience to their teachers' instructions? But when they begin to grow towards maturity, their offences are oftentimes very great and heinous; such as gluttony, pilfering money from their parents, dicing, revelings, drunkenness, courting of maidens, and defiling of marriage-beds. Wherefore it is expedient that such impetuous heats should with great care be kept under and restrained. For the ripeness of that age admits no bounds in its pleasures, is skittish, and needs a curb to check it; so that those parents who do not hold in their sons with great strength about that time find to their surprise that they are giving their vicious inclinations full swing in the pursuit of the vilest actions. Wherefore it is a duty incumbent upon wise parents, in that age especially, to set a strict watch upon them, and to keep them within the bounds of sobriety by instructions, threatenings, entreaties, counsels, promises, and by laying before them examples of those men (on one side) who by immoderate love of pleasures have brought themselves into great mischief, and of those (on the other hand) who by abstinence in the pursuit of them have purchased to themselves very great praise and glory. For these two things (hope of honor, and fear of punishment) are, in a sort, the first elements of virtue; the former whereof spurs men on more eagerly to the pursuit of honest studies, while the latter blunts the edge of their inclinations to vicious courses.

¹⁷ And in sum, it is necessary to restrain young men from the conversation of debauched persons, lest they take infection from their evil examples. This was taught by Pythagoras in certain enigmatical sentences, which I shall here relate and expound, as being greatly useful to further virtuous inclinations. Such are these: Taste not of fish that have black tails; that is, converse not with men that are smutted with vicious qualities. Stride not over the beam of the scales; wherein he teaches us the regard we ought to have for justice, so as not to go beyond its

measures. Sit not on a phoenix, wherein he forbids sloth, and requires us to take care to provide ourselves with the necessaries of life. Do not strike hands with every man; he means we ought not to be over hasty to make acquaintances or friendships with others. Wear not a tight string; that is, we are to labor after a free and independent way of living, and to submit to no fetters. Stir not up the fire with a sword; signifying that we ought not to provoke a man more when he is angry already (since this is a most unseemly act), but we should rather comply with him while his passion is in its heat. Eat not your heart; which forbids to afflict our souls, and waste them with vexatious cares. Abstain from beans; that is, keep out of public offices, for anciently the choice of the officers of state was made by beans. Put not food in a chamber-pot; wherein he declares that elegant discourse ought not to be put into an impure mind; for discourse is the food of the mind, which is rendered unclean by the foulness of the man who receives it. When men are arrived at the goal, they should not turn back; that is, those who are near the end of their days, and see the period of their lives approaching, ought to entertain it contentedly, and not to be grieved at it.

But to return from this digression, our children, as I have said, are to be debarred the company of all evil men, but especially flatterers. For I would still affirm what I have often said in the presence of divers fathers, that there is not a more pestilent sort of men than these, nor any that more certainly and speedily hurry youth into precipices. Yes, they utterly ruin both fathers and sons, making the old age of the one and the youth of the other full of sorrow, while they cover the hook of their evil counsels with the unavoidable bait of voluptuousness. Parents, when they have good estates to leave their children, exhort them to sobriety, flatterers to drunkenness; parents exhort to continence, these to lasciviousness; parents to good husbandry, these to prodigality; parents to industry, these to slothfulness. And they usually entertain them with such discourses as these: The whole life of man is but a point of time; let us enjoy it therefore while it lasts, and not spend it to no purpose. Why should you so much regard the displeasure of your father?---an old dotting fool, with one foot already in the grave, and 'tis to be hoped it will not be long ere we carry him there altogether. And some of them there are who procure young men foul harlots, yes, prostitute wives to them; and they even make a prey of those things which the careful fathers have provided for the sustenance of their old age. A cursed tribe! True friendship's hypocrites, they have no knowledge of plain dealing and frank speech. They flatter the rich, and despise the poor; and they seduce the young, as by a musical charm. When those who feed them begin to laugh, then they grin and show their teeth. They are mere counterfeits, bastard pretenders to humanity, living at the nod and beck of the rich; free by birth, yet slaves by choice, who always think themselves abused when they are not so, because they are not supported in idleness at others' cost. Wherefore, if fathers have any care for the good breeding of their children, they ought to drive such foul beasts as these out of doors. They ought also to keep them from the companionship of vicious school-fellows, for these are able to corrupt the most ingenuous dispositions.

¹⁸ These counsels which I have now given are of great worth and importance; what I have now to add touches certain allowances that are to be made to human

nature. Again, therefore, I would not have fathers of an over-rigid and harsh temper, but so mild as to forgive some slips of youth, remembering that they themselves were once young. But as physicians are wont to mix their bitter medicines with sweet syrups, to make what is pleasant a vehicle for what is wholesome, so should fathers temper the keenness of their reproofs with lenity. They may occasionally loosen the reins, and allow their children to take some liberties they are inclined to, and again, when it is fit, manage them with a straighter bridle. But chiefly should they bear their errors without passion, if it may be; and if they chance to be heated more than ordinary, they ought not to suffer the flame to burn long. For it is better that a father's anger be hasty than severe; because the heaviness of his wrath, joined with implacableness, is no small argument of hatred towards the child. It is good also not to discover the notice they take of divers faults, and to transfer to such cases that dimness of sight and hardness of hearing that are wont to accompany old age; so as sometimes not to hear what they hear, nor to see what they see, of their children's miscarriages. We use to bear with some failings in our friends, and it is no wonder if we do the like to our children, especially when we sometimes overlook drunkenness in our very servants. You have at times been too straight-handed to your son; make him at other times a larger allowance. You have, it may be, too angry with him; pardon him the next fault to make him amends. He has made use of a servant's wit to circumvent you in something; restrain your anger. He has made bold to take a yoke of oxen out of the pasture, or he has come home smelling of his yesterday's drink; take no notice of it; and if of ointments too, say nothing. For by this means the wild colt sometimes is made more tame. Besides, for those who are intemperate in their youthful lusts, and will not be amended by reproof, it is good to provide wives; for marriage is the strongest bond to hamper wild youth withal. But we must take care that the wives we procure for them be neither of too noble a birth nor of too great a portion to suit their circumstances; for it is a wise saying, drive on your own track. Whereas men that marry women very much superior to themselves are not so truly husbands to their wives, as they are unawares made slaves to their portions.

I will add a few words more, and put an end to these advices. The chief thing that fathers are to look to is that they themselves become effectual examples to their children, by doing all those things which belong to them and avoiding all vicious practices, that in their lives, as in a glass, their children may see enough to give them an aversion to all ill words and actions. For those that chide children for such faults as they themselves fall into unconsciously accuse themselves, under their children's names. And if they are altogether vicious in their own lives, they lose the right of reproaching their very servants, and much more do they forfeit it towards their sons. Yes, what is more than that, they make themselves even counselors and instructors to them in wickedness. For where old men are impudent, there of necessity must the young men be so too. Wherefore we are to apply our minds to all such practices as may conduce to the good breeding of our children. And here we may take example from Eurydice of Hierapolis, who, although she was an Illyrian, and so thrice a barbarian, yet applied herself to learning when she was well advanced in years, that she might teach her children. Her love towards her children appears evidently in this Epigram of hers, which she dedicated to the Muses:

*Eurydice to the Muses here doth raise
This monument, her honest love to praise;
Who her grown sons that she might scholars breed,
Then well in years, herself first learned to read.*

And thus have I finished the precepts which I designed to give concerning this subject. But that they should all be followed by any one reader is rather, I fear, to be wished than hoped. And to follow the greater part of them, though it may not be impossible to human nature, yet will need a concurrence of more than ordinary diligence joined with good fortune.