

**John Locke**  
*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*  
 (1693)

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**§ 37 [Spoiling]** These are oversights usually committed by those who seem to take the greatest care of their children's education. But if we look into the common management of children, we shall have reason to wonder, in the great dissoluteness of manners which the world complains of, that there are any footsteps at all left of virtue. I desire to know what vice can be named, which parents, and those about children, do not season them with, and drop into them the seeds of, as soon as they are capable to receive them? I do not mean by the examples they give, and the patterns they set before them, which is encouragement enough; but that which I would take notice of here is, the downright teaching them vice, and actual putting them out of the way of virtue. Before they can go, they principle them with violence, revenge, and cruelty. Give me a blow, that I may beat him, is a lesson which most children every day hear; and it is thought nothing, because their hands have not strength to do any mischief. But I ask, does not this corrupt their mind? Is not this the way of force and violence, that they are set in? And if they have been taught when little, to strike and hurt others by proxy, and encouraged to rejoice in the harm they have brought upon them, and see them suffer, are they not prepared to do it when they are strong enough to be felt themselves, and can strike to some purpose.

The coverings of our bodies which are for modesty, warmth and deference, are by the folly or vice of parents recommended to their children for other uses. They are made matters of vanity and emulation. A child is set a-longing after a new suit, for the finery of it; and when the little girl is tricked up in her new gown and commode, how can her mother do less than teach her to admire herself, by calling her, her little queen and her princess? Thus the little ones are taught to be proud of their clothes, before they can put them on. And why should they not continue to value themselves for their outside fashionableness of the taylor or tirewoman's making, when their parents have so early influenced them to do so?

Lying and equivocations, and excuses little different from lying, are put into the mouths of young people, and commended in apprentices and children, whilst they are for their after or parents advantage. And can it be thought, that he that finds the straining of truth dispensed with, and encouraged, whilst it is for his godly master's turn, will not make use of that privilege for himself, when it may be for his own profit ?

Those of the meaner sort are hindered, by the straitness of their fortunes; from encouraging intemperance in their children, by the temptation of their diet, or invitations to eat or drink more than enough; but. their own ill examples, whenever plenty comes in their way, shew, that 'tis not the dislike of drunkenness or gluttony, that keeps them from excess, but want of materials. But if we look into the houses of those who are a little warmer in their fortunes, their eating and drinking are made so much the great business and happiness of life, that children are thought neglected, if they have not their share of it. Sauces and ragouts, and food disguised by all the arts of cookery, must tempt

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their palates, when their bellies are full; and then, for fear the stomach should be overcharged, a pretence is found, for the other glass of wine to help digestion, though it only serves to increase the surfeit. Is my young master a little out of order, the first question is, what will my dear eat? what shall I get for thee? Eating and drinking are instantly pressed; and every body's invention is set on work to find out something luscious and delicate enough to prevail over the want of appetite, which Nature has wisely ordered in the beginning of distempers, as a defence against their increase; that being freed from the ordinary labour of digesting any new load in the stomach, she may be at leisure to correct and master the peccant humours.

And where children are so happy in the care of their parents, as by their prudence to be kept from the excess of their tables, to the sobriety of a plain and simple diet, yet there too are scarce to be preserved from the contagion that poisons the mind; though, by a discreet management whilst they are under tuition, their healths perhaps may be pretty well secure, yet their desires must needs yield to the lessons which everywhere will be read to them upon this part of epicurism. The commendation that eating well has everywhere, cannot fail to be a successful incentive to natural appetites, and bring them quickly to the liking and expence of a fashionable table. This shall have from every one, even the reprovers of vice, the title of living-well. And what shall sullen reason dare to say against the public testimony? Or can it hope to be heard, if it should call that luxury, which is so much owned and universally practised by those of the best quality?

This is now so grown a vice, and has so great supports, that I know not whether it do not put in for the name of virtue; and whether it will not be thought folly, or want of knowledge of the world, to open one's mouth against it? And truly I should suspect, that what I have here said of it, might be censured as a little satyr out of my way, did I not mention it with this view, that it might awaken the care and watchfulness of parents in the education of their children, when they see how they are beset on every side, not only with temptations, but instructors to vice, and that, perhaps, in those they thought places of security.

I shall not dwell any longer on this subject, much less run over all the particulars that would show what pains are used to corrupt children, and instil principles of vice into them. But I desire parents soberly to confider, what irregularity or vice there is which children are not visibly taught, and whether it be not their duty and wisdom to provide them other instructions.

**§ 43 Punishments** This being laid down in general, as the course ought to be taken, 'tis fit we now come to consider the parts of the discipline to be used, a little more particularly. I have spoken so much of carrying a strict hand over children, that perhaps I shall be suspected of not considering enough, what is due to their tender age and constitutions. But that opinion will vanish, when you have heard me a little farther. For I am very apt to think, that great severity of punishment does but very little good; nay, great harm in education: and I believe it will be found, that, caeteris paribus, those children who have been most chastised, seldom make the best men. All that I have hitherto contended for, is, that whatsoever rigour is necessary, it is more to be used the younger children are; and having by a due application wrought its effect, it is to be relaxed, and changed into a milder sort of government.

**§ 44 Awe** A compliance and suppleness of their wills, being by a steady hand introduced by parents, before children have memories to retain the beginnings of it, will seem natural to them, and work afterwards in them, as if it were so,

preventing all occasions of struggling or repining. The only care is, that it be begun early, and inflexibly kept to, till awe and respect be grown familiar, and there appears not the least reluctance in the submission, and ready obedience of their minds. When this reverence is once thus established (which it must be early, or else it will cost pains and blows to recover it, and the more, the longer it is deferred, 'tis by it, mixed still with as much indulgence, as they make not an ill use of, and not by beating, chiding, or other servile punishments, [that] they are for the future to be governed as they grow up to more understanding.

§ 45 That this is so, will be easily allowed, when it is but considered what is to be aimed at in an ingenuous education, and upon what it turns.

**1. Self-denial.** He that has not a mastery over his inclinations, he that knows not how to resist the importunity of present pleasure or pain, for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry, and is in danger never to be good for any thing. This temper, therefore, so contrary to unguided nature, is to be got betimes; and this habit, as the true foundation of future ability and happiness, is to be wrought into the mind, as early as may be, even from the first dawning of any knowledge or apprehension in children; and so to be confirmed in them, by all the care and ways imaginable, by those who have the oversight of their education.

§ 46 **2. Dejected.** On the other side, if the mind be curbed, and humbled too much in children; if their spirits be abased and broken much, by too strict an hand over them, they lose all their vigour and industry, and are in a worse state than the former. For extravagant young fellows, that have liveliness and spirit, come sometimes to be set right, and so make able and great men: but dejected minds, timorous and tame, and low spirits, are hardly ever to be raised, and very seldom attain to any thing. To avoid the danger that is on either hand is the great art; and he that has found a way, how to keep up a child's spirit, easy, active, and free; and yet, at the same time, to restrain him from many things he has a mind to, and to draw him to things that are uneasy to him; he, I, say, that knows how to reconcile these seeming contradictions, has, in my opinion, got the true secret of education.

§ 52 **Rewards** Beating them, and all other sorts of slavish and corporal punishments, are not the discipline fit to be used in the education of those we would have wise, good, and ingenuous men; and therefore very rarely to be applied, and that only in great occasions, and cases of extremity. On the other side, to flatter children by rewards of things that are pleasant to them, is as carefully to be avoided. He that will give to his son apples, or sugar-plums, or what else of this kind he is most delighted with, to make him learn his book, does but authorize his love of pleasure, and cocker up that dangerous propensity, which he ought by all means to subdue and stifle in him. You can never hope to teach him to master it whilst you compound for the check you give his inclination in one place, by the satisfaction you propose to it in another. To make a good, a wise, and a virtuous man, it is fit he should learn to cross his appetite, and deny his inclination to riches, finery, or pleasing his palate, etc., whenever his reason advises the contrary, and his duty requires it. But when you draw him to do anything that is fit, by the offer of money; or reward the pains of learning his book, by the pleasure of a luscious morsel; when you promise him a lace-cravat, or a fine new suit, upon performance of some of his little tasks; what do you, by proposing these as rewards, but allow them to be the good things he should aim at, and thereby encourage his longing for them, and accustom him to place his happiness in them? Thus people, to prevail with children to be industrious about their grammar, dancing, or some

other such matter of no great moment to the happiness or usefulness of their lives by misapplied rewards and punishments, sacrifice their virtue, invert the order of their education, and teach them luxury, pride, or covetousness, etc. For in this way, flattering those wrong inclinations, which they should restrain and suppress, they lay the foundations of those future vices, which cannot be avoided, but by curbing our desires, and accustoming them early to submit to reason.

**§ 53** I say, not this, that I would have children kept from the conveniences or pleasures of life, that are not injurious to their health or virtue. On the contrary, I would have their lives made as pleasant, and as agreeable to them as may be, in a plentiful enjoyment of whatsoever might innocently delight them: provided it be with this caution, that they have those enjoyments only as the consequences of the state of esteem and acceptance they are in with their parents and governors; but they should never be offered or bestowed on them, as the reward of this or that particular performance, that they show an aversion to, or to which they would not have applied themselves without that temptation.

**§ 54** But if you take away the rod on one hand, and these little encouragements, which they are taken with, on the other, How then (will you say) shall children be governed? Remove hope and fear, and there is an end of all discipline. I grant, that good and evil, reward and punishment, are the only motives to a rational creature; these are the spur and reins whereby all mankind are set on work and guided, and therefore they are to be made use of to children too. For I advise their parents and governors always to carry this in their minds, that they are to be treated as rational creatures.

**§ 55** Rewards, I grant, and punishments must be proposed to children, if we intend to work upon them. The mistake, I imagine, is that those that are generally made use of, are ill chosen. The pains and pleasures of the body are, I think, of ill consequence, when made the rewards and punishments, whereby men would prevail on their children: for they serve but to increase and strengthen those appetites which 'tis our business to subdue and master. What principle of virtue do you lay in a child, if you will redeem his desires of one pleasure by the proposal of another? This is but to enlarge his appetite, and instruct it to wander. If a child cries for an unwholesome and dangerous fruit, you purchase his quiet by giving him a less hurtful sweetmeat; this perhaps may preserve his health, but spoils his mind, and sets that farther out of order. For here you only change the object, but flatter still his appetite, and allow that must be satisfied: wherein, as I have showed, lies the root of the mischief: and till you bring him to be able to bear a denial of that satisfaction, the child may at present be quiet and orderly, but the disease is not cured. By this way of proceeding you foment and cherish in him, that which is the spring from whence all the evil flows, which will be sure on the next occasion to break out again with more violence, give him stronger longings, and you more trouble.

**§ 60 Shame** Frequent beating or chiding is therefore carefully to be avoided; because it never produces any good, farther than it serves to raise shame and abhorrence of the miscarriage that brought it on them. And if the greatest part of the trouble be not sense that they have done amiss, and the apprehension that they have drawn on themselves the just displeasure of their best friends, the pain of whipping will work but an imperfect cure; it only patches up for the present, and skins it over, but reaches not to the bottom of the sore. Shame, then, and apprehension of displeasure, being that which ought alone to give a check and hold the reins, 'tis impossible but punishment should lose that

efficacy, when it often returns. Shame has in children the same place as modesty in women, which cannot be kept, and often transgressed against. And as to the apprehension of displeasure in the parents, that will come to be very insignificant, if the marks of that displeasure quickly cease. And therefore I think parents should well consider, what faults in their children are weighty enough to deserve the declaration of their anger: but when their displeasure is once declared to a degree that carries any punishment with it, they ought not presently to lay by the severity of their brows, but to restore their children to their former grace with some difficulty; and delay till their conformity, and more than ordinary merit, make good their amendment. If this be not so ordered, punishment will be by familiarity but a thing of course; and offending, being punished and then forgiven, be as natural and ordinary as noon, night, and morning, following one another.

**§ 61 Reputation** Concerning reputation, I shall only remark this one thing more of it: that, though it be not the true principle and measure of virtue, (for that is the knowledge of a man's duty, and the satisfaction it is to obey his Maker, in following the dictates of that light God has given him, with the hopes of acceptance and reward), yet it is that which comes nearest to it: and being the testimony and applause that other people's reason, as it were, by common consent, gives to virtuous and well-ordered actions, is the proper guide and encouragement of children, till they grow able to judge for themselves, and to find what is right by their own reason.

**§ 62** This consideration may direct parents how to manage themselves in reproving and commending their children. The rebukes and chiding, which their faults will sometimes make hardly to be avoided, should not only be sober, grave, and unpassionate words, but also alone and in private: but the commendations children deserve, they should receive before others. This doubles the reward, by spreading their praise; but the backwardness parents show in divulging their faults, will make them set a greater value on their credit themselves, and teach them to be the more careful to preserve the good opinion of others, whilst they think they have it: but when being exposed to shame, by publishing their miscarriages, they give it up for lost, that check upon them is taken off, and they will be the less careful to preserve other's good thoughts of them, the more they suspect that their reputation with them is already blemished.

**§ 81 Reasoning** It will perhaps be wondered, that I mention reasoning with children: and yet I cannot but think that the true way of dealing with them. They understand it as early as they do language; and, if I misobserve not, they love to be treated as rational creatures, sooner than is imagined. 'Tis a pride should be cherished in them, and, as much as can be, made the greatest instrument to turn them by.

But when I talk of reasoning, I do not intend any other, but such as is suited to the child's capacity and apprehension. Nobody can think a boy of three or seven years old, should be argued with, as a grown man. Long discourses, and philosophical reasonings, at best, amaze and confound, but do not instruct, children. When I say therefore, that they must be treated as rational creatures, I mean, that you should make them sensible, by the mildness of your carriage, and the composure, even in your correction of them, that what you do is reasonable in you, and useful and necessary for them; and that it is not out of caprice, passion, or fancy, that you command or forbid them any thing. This they are capable of understanding; and there is no virtue they should be excited to, nor fault they should be kept from, which I do not think they may be

convinced of: but it must be by such reasons as their age and understanding are capable of, and those proposed always in very few and plain words. The foundations on which several duties are built, and the fountains of right and wrong, from which they spring, are not, perhaps, easily to be let into the minds of grown men, not used to abstract their thoughts from common received opinions. Much less are children capable of reasonings from remote principles. They cannot conceive the force of long deductions: the reasons that move them must be obvious, and level to their thoughts, and such as may (if I may so say) be felt and touched. But yet, if their age, temper, and inclinations, be considered, they will never want such motives, as may be sufficient to convince them. If there be no other more particular, yet these will always be intelligible, and of force, to deter them from any fault, fit to be taken notice of in them, (*viz.*) that it will be a discredit and disgrace to them, and displease you.

**§ 82 Examples** But, of all the ways whereby children are to be instructed, and their manners formed, the plainest, easiest, and most efficacious, is to set before their eyes the examples of those things you would have them do or avoid. Which, when they are pointed out to them, in the practice of persons within their knowledge, with some reflections on their beauty or unbecomingness, are of more force to draw or deter their imitation, than any discourses which can be made to them. Virtues and vices can by no words be so plainly set before their understandings, as the actions of other men will show them, when you direct their observation, and bid them view this or that good or bad quality in their practice. And the beauty or uncomeliness of many things, in good and ill breeding, will be better learnt, and make deeper impressions on them, in the examples of others, than from any rules or instructions that can be given about them.

This is a method to be used, not only whilst they are young, but to be continued, even as long as they shall be under another's tuition or conduct. Nay, I know not whether it be not the best way to be used by a father, as long as he shall think fit, on any occasion, to reform any thing he wishes mended in his son; nothing sinking so gently and so deep, into men's minds, as example. And what ill they either overlook, or indulge in them themselves, they cannot but dislike, and be ashamed of, when it is set before them in another.

**§ 83 Whipping** It may be doubted concerning whipping, when, as the last remedy, it comes to be necessary, at what times, and by whom it should be done: whether presently upon the committing the fault, whilst it is yet fresh and hot; and whether parents themselves should beat their children. As to the first, I think it should not be done presently, lest passion mingle with it and so, though it exceed the just proportion, yet it lose the authority; for even children discern when we do things in passion. But, as I said before, that has most weight with them, that appears sedately to come from their parents' reason; and they are not without this distinction. Next, if you have any discreet servant capable of it, and has the place of governing your child (for if you have a tutor, there is no doubt) I think it is best the smart should come more immediately from another's hand, though by the parent's order, who should see it done; whereby the parent's authority will be preserved, and the child's aversion for the pain it suffers rather be turned on the person that immediately inflicts it. For I would have a father seldom strike his child, but upon very urgent necessity, and as the last remedy: and then perhaps it will be fit to do it so that the child should not quickly forget it.

**§ 84** But, as I said before, beating is the worst, and therefore the last, means to

be used in the correction of children; and that only in cases of extremity, after all gentler ways have been tried, and proved unsuccessful: which, if well observed, there will be very seldom any need of blows. For, it not being to be imagined that a child will often, if ever, dispute his father's present command in any particular instance; and the father not rigorously interposing his absolute authority in positive rules, concerning childish or indifferent actions, wherein his son is to have his liberty: nor concerning his learning or improvement wherein there is no compulsion to be used, there remains only the prohibition of some vicious actions, wherein a child is capable of obstinacy, and consequently can deserve beating: and so there will be but very few occasions of that discipline to be used by any one, who considers well, and orders his child's education as it should be. For the first seven years, what vices can a child be guilty of, but lying, or some ill-natured tricks; the repeated, commission whereof, after his father's direct command against it, shall bring him into the condemnation of obstinacy, and the chastisement of the rod? If any vicious inclination in him be, in the first appearance and instances of it, treated as it should be, first with your wonder, and then, if returning again a second time, discountenanced with the severe brow of the father, tutor, and all about him, and a treatment suitable to the state of discredit before-mentioned, and this continued till he be made sensible and ashamed of his fault, I imagine there will be no need of any other correction, nor ever any occasion to come to blows. The necessity of such chastisement is usually the consequence only of former indulgencies or neglects. If vicious inclinations were watched from the beginning, and the first irregularities which they caused corrected by those gentler ways, we should seldom have to do with more than one disorder at once, which would be easily set right without any stir or noise, and not require so harsh a discipline as beating. Thus, one by one, as they appeared, they, might all be weeded out without any signs or memory that ever they had been there. But we letting their faults (by indulging and humouring our little ones) grow up till they are sturdy and numerous, and the deformity of them makes us ashamed and uneasy, we are fain to come to the plough and the harrow; the spade and the pick-ax must go deep to come at the roots, and all the force, skill, and diligence we can use, is scarce enough to cleanse the vitiated seed-plot overgrown with weeds, and restore us the hopes of fruits to reward our pains in its season.

§ 85 This course, if observed, will spare both father and child the trouble of repeated injunctions, and multiplied rules of doing and forbearing. For I am of opinion, that of those actions which tend to vicious habits (which are those alone that a father should interpose his authority and commands in), none should be forbidden children till they are found guilty of them. For such untimely prohibitions, if they do nothing worse, do at least so much towards teaching and allowing them, that they suppose that children may be guilty of them, who would possibly be safer in the ignorance of any such faults. And the best remedy to stop them, is, as I have said, to show wonder and amazement at any such action as hath a vicious tendency, when it is first taken notice of in a child. For example, when he is first found in a lie, or any ill-natured trick, the first remedy should be, to talk to him of it as a strange, monstrous matter, that it could not be imagined he would have done; and so shame him out of it.

§ 86 It will be ('tis like) objected, That whatever I fancy of the tractableness of children, and the prevalency of those softer ways of shame and commendation; yet there are many, who will never apply themselves to their books, and to what they ought to learn, unless they are scourged to it. This I fear is nothing but the language of ordinary schools and fashion, which have never suffered the other to be tried as it should be, in places where it could be taken notice of.

Why, else, does the learning of Latin and Greek need the rod, when French and Italian needs it not? Children learn to dance and fence without whipping: nay, arithmetic, drawing, etc., they apply themselves well enough to, without beating: which would make one suspect that there is something strange, unnatural, and disagreeable to that age, in the things required in Grammar-Schools, or the methods used there, that children cannot be brought to, without the severity of the lash, and hardly with that too; or else that it is a mistake, that those tongues could not be taught them without beating.

§ 87 But let us suppose some so negligent or idle, that they will not be brought to learn by the gentle ways proposed; for we must grant, that there will be children found of all tempers, yet it does not thence follow, that the rough discipline of the cudgel is to be used at all. Nor can any one be concluded unmanageable by the milder, methods of government, till they have been thoroughly tried upon him; and, if they will not prevail with him to use his endeavours, and do what is in his power to do, we make no excuse for the obstinate: blows are the proper remedies for those: but blows laid on in a way different from the ordinary. He that wilfully neglects his book, and stubbornly refuses any thing he can do, required of him by his father expressing himself in a positive serious command, should not be corrected with two or three angry lashes, for not performing his task, and the same punishment repeated again and again, upon every the like default. But, when it is brought to that pass, that wilfulness evidently shows itself and makes blows necessary, I think the chastisement should be a little more sedate, and a little more severe, and the whipping (mingled with admonitions between) so continued, till the impressions of it on the mind were found legible in the face, voice, and submission of the child, not so sensible of the smart as of the fault he has been guilty of, and melting in true sorrow under it. If such a correction as this, tried some few times at fit distances, and carried to the utmost severity, with the visible displeasure of the father all the while, will not work the effect, turn the mind, and produce a future compliance, what can be hoped from blows, and to what purpose should they be any more used? Beating, when you can expect no good from it will look more like the fury of an enraged enemy, than the goodwill of a compassionate friend; and such chastisement carries with it only provocation without any prospect of amendment. If it be any father's misfortune to have a son thus perverse and untractable, I know not what more he can do but pray for him. But I imagine, if a right course be taken with children from the beginning, very few will be found to be such; and when there are any such instances, they are not to be the rule for the education of those who are better natured, and may be managed with better usage.

§ 123 **Sauntering** Contrary to this busy inquisitive temper, there is sometimes observable in children a listless carelessness, a want of regard to any thing, and a sort of trifling, even at their business. This sauntering humour I look on as one of the worst qualities that can appear in a child, as well as one of the hardest to be cured, where it is natural. But, it being liable to be mistaken in some cases, care must be taken to make a right judgment concerning that trifling at their books or business, which may sometimes be complained of in a child. Upon the first suspicion a father has that his son is of a sauntering temper, he must carefully observe him, whether he be listless and indifferent in all his actions, or whether in some things alone he be slow and sluggish, but in others vigorous and eager: for though he find that he does loiter at his book, and let a good deal of the time he spends in his chamber or study run idly away, he must not presently conclude that this is from a sauntering humour in his temper; it may be childishness, and a preferring something to his study which his thoughts run on; and he dislikes his book, as is natural, because it is



forced upon him as a task. To know this perfectly, you must watch him at play, when he is out of his place and time of study, following his own inclinations; and see there, whether he be vigorous and active; whether he designs anything, and with labour and eagerness pursues it, till he has accomplished what he aimed at; or whether he, lazily and listlessly dreams away his time. If this sloth be only when he is about his book, I think it may be easily cured; if it be in his temper, it will require a little more pains and attention to remedy it.

**§ 124** If you are satisfied, by his earnestness at play, or any thing else he sets his mind on, in the intervals between his hours of business, that he is not of himself inclined to laziness, but that only want of relish of his book makes him negligent and sluggish in his application to it, the first step is to try, by talking to him kindly of the folly and inconvenience of it, whereby he loses a good part of his time, which he might have for his diversion: but be sure to talk calmly and kindly, and not much at first but only these plain reasons in short. If this prevails, you have gained the point in the most desirable way, which is reason and kindness. If it prevails not, try to shame him out of it, by laughing at him for it, asking every day, when he comes to table, if there be no strangers there, "how long he was that day about his business?" And if he has not done it, in the time he might be well supposed to have despatched it, expose and turn him into ridicule for it; but mix no chiding, only put on a pretty cold brow towards him, and keep it till he reform; and let his mother, tutor, and all about him, do so too. If this work not the effect you desire, then tell him he shall be no longer troubled with a tutor to take care of his education: you will not be at the charge to have him spend his time idly with him; but since he prefers this or that (whatever play he delights in) to his book, that only he shall do; and so in earnest set him to work on his beloved play, and keep him steadily and in earnest to it mornug and afternoon, till he be fully surfeited, and would, at any rate, change it for some hours at his book again: but when you thus set him a task of his play, you must be sure to look after liun yourself, or set somebody else to do it, that may constantly see him employed in it, and that he be not permitted to be idle at that too. I say, your self look after him; for it is worth the father's while, whatever business he has, to bestow two or three days upon his son, to cure so great a mischief as is sauntering at his business.

**§ 125** This is what I propose, if it be idleness not from his general temper, but a peculiar or acquired aversion to learning, which you must be careful to examine and distinguish, which you shall certainly know by the way above proposed. But though you have your eyes upon him to watch what he does with the time he has at his own disposal, yet you must not let him perceive that you or any body else do so. For that may restrain him from following his own inclination, and that being the thing his head or heart is upon; and not daring to prosecute it for fear of you, he may forbear doing other things, and so seem to be idle and negligent, when in truth it is nothing but being intent on that which the fear of your eye or knowledge keeps him from erecuting. You must therefore, when you would try him, give him full liberty; but let some body whom you can trust observe what he does. And it will be best he should have his play-day of liberty, when you and all that he may suspect to have an eye upon him are abroad, that so he may without check follow his natural inclination. Thus by his employing of such times of liberty, you will easily discern whether it be listlessness in his temper, or aversion to his book that makes him saunter away his time of study.

**§ 126** If listlessness and dreaming be his natural disposition, this unpromising temper is one of the hardest to be dealt with, because it generally carrying with it an indifferency for future things, may be attributed to want of foresight and

want of desire; and how to plant or increase either of these, where Nature has given a cold or contrary temper, is not I think very easy. As soon as it is perceived, the first thing to be done is to find out his most predominate passion, and carefully examine what it is to which the greatest bent of his mind has the most steady and earnest tendency. And when you have found that, you must set that on work to excite his industry to any thing else. If he loves praise, or play, or fine clothes, etc., or, on the other side, dreads shame and disgrace, your displeasure, etc., whatever it be that he loves most, except it be sloth (for that will never set him on work), let that be made use of to excite him to activity. For in this listless temper you are not to fear an excess of appetite (as in all other cases) by cherishing it. 'Tis that which you want, and therefore must labour to stir up and increase. For where there is no desire, there will be no industry.

**§ 127** If you have not hold enough upon him this way to stir up rigour and activity in him, you must employ him in some constant bodily labour, whereby he may get a habit of doing something. The keeping him hard to some study, were the better way to get him an habit of exercising and applying his mind. But, because this is an invisible attention, and nobody can tell when he is or is not idle at it, you must find bodily employments for him, which he must be constantly busied in and kept to; and if they have some little hardship and shame in them, it may not be the worse, to make them the sooner weary him, and desire to return to his book. But be sure, when you exchange his book for his other labour, set him such a task, to be done in such a time, as may allow him no opportunity to be idle. Only, after you have by this way brought him to be attentive and industrious at his book, you may, upon his despatching his study within the time set him, give him as a reward some respite from his other labour; which you may diminish, as you find him grow more and more steady in his application; and, at last, wholly take off, when his sauntering at his book is cured.

**§ 128 Compulsion** We formerly observed, that variety and freedom was that that delighted children, and recommended their plays to them; and that therefore their book, or anything we would have them learn, should not be enjoined them as business. This their parents, tutors, and teachers are apt to forget; and their impatience to have them busied in what is fit for them to do suffers them not to deceive them into it: but by the repeated injunctions they meet with, children quickly distinguish between what is required of them and what not. When this mistake has once made his book uneasy to him, the cure is to be applied at the other end. And since it will be then too late to endeavour to make it a play to him, you must take the contrary course; observe what play he is most delighted with; enjoin that and make him play so many hours every day, not as a punishment for playing, but as if it were the business required of him. This, if I mistake not, will in a few days, make him so weary of his most beloved sport, that he will prefer his book, or any thing to it, especially if it may redeem him from any part of the task of play that is set him; and he may be suffered to employ some part of the time destined to his task of play in his book, or such other exercise as is really useful to him. This I at least think a better cure than that forbidding (which usually increases the desire) or any other punishment that should be made use of to remedy it. For when you have once glutted his appetite (which may safely be done in all things but eating and drinking), and made him surfeit of what you would have him avoid, you have put into him a principle of aversion, and you need not so much fear afterwards his longing for the same thing again.

**§ 129** This, I think, is sufficiently evident, that children generally hate to be

idle. All the care then is, that their busy humour should be constantly employed in something of use to them; which if you will attain, you must make what you would have them do a recreation to them, and not a business. The way to do this, so that they may not perceive you have any hand in it is this proposed here, viz. to make them weary of that which you would not have them do, by enjoining and making them, under some pretence or other, do it till they are surfeited. For example: Does your son play at top and scourge too much? Enjoin him to play so many hours every day, and look that he do it; and you shall see he will quickly be sick of it and willing to leave it. By this means, making the recreations you dislike a business to him, he will of himself with delight betake himself to those things you would have him do, especially if they be proposed as rewards for having performed his task in that play which is commanded him. For, if he be ordered every day to whip his top so long as to make him sufficiently weary, do you not think he will apply himself with eagerness to his book, and wish for it if you promise it him as a reward of having whipped his top lustily, quite out all the time that is set in him? Children, in the things they do, if they comport with their age, find little difference, so they may the esteem they have for one thing above another, they borrow from others; so that what those about them make to be a reward to them, will really be so. By this art, it is in their governor's choice, whether scotch-hoppers shall reward their dancing, or dancing their scotch-hoppers whether peg-top, or reading, playing at trap, or studying the globes, shall he more acceptable and pleasing to them; all that they desire being to be busy, and busy, as they imagine, in things of their own choice, and which they receive as favours from their parents, or others for whom they have respect, and with whom they would be in credit. A set of children thus ordered, and kept from the ill example of others, would all of them, I suppose, with as much earnestness and delight, learn to read, write, and what else one would have them, as others do their ordinary plays: and the eldest being thus entered, and this made the fashion of the place, it would be as impossible to hinder them from learning the one, as it is ordinarily to keep them from the other.

**§ 146 Company** This that I have said here, if it were reflected on, would perhaps lead us a little farther, and let us see of what influence company is. 'Tis not the modes of civility alone that are imprinted by conversation; the tincture of company sinks deeper than the outside; and possibly, if a true estimate were made of the morality and religions of the world, we should find that the far greater part of mankind received even those opinions and ceremonies they would die for, rather from the fashions of their countries, and the constant practice of those about them, than from any conviction of their reasons. I mention this only to let you see of what moment I think company is to your son in all the parts of his life, and therefore how much that one part is to be weighed and provided for, it being of greater force to work upon him than all you can do besides.

**§ 147 Learning** You will wonder, perhaps, that I put learning last, especially if I tell you I think it the least part. This will seem strange in the mouth of a bookish man: and this making usually the chief, if not only bustle and stir about children, this being almost that alone, which is thought on, when people talk of education, makes it the greater paradox. When I consider what a-do is made about a little Latin and Greek, how many years are spent in it, and what a noise and business it makes to no purpose, I can hardly forbear thinking that the parents of children still live in fear of the school-master's rod, which they look on as the only instrument of education; as a language or two to be its whole business. How else is it possible, that a child should be chained to the oar seven, eight, or ten of the best years of his life, to get a language or two,

which I think might be had at a great deal cheaper rate of pains and time, and be learned almost in playing.

Forgive me therefore, if I say, I cannot with patience think, that a young gentleman should be put into the herd, and be driven with a whip and scourge, as if he were to run the gauntlet through the several classes, "ad cariendum in genii cultum." "What then," say you, "would you not have him write and read? Shall he be more ignorant than the clerk of our parish, who takes Hopkins and Stembold for the best poets in the world, whom yet he makes worse than they are by his ill reading?" Not so, not so fast, I beseech you. Reading, and writing, and learning, I allow to be necessary, but yet not the chief business. I imagine you would think him a very foolish fellow, that should not value a virtuous or a wise man infinitely before a great scholar. Not but that I think learning a great help to both, in well-disposed minds; but yet it must be confessed also, that in others not so disposed, it helps them only to be the more foolish or worse men. I say this, that, when you consider of the breeding of your son, and are looking out for a school-master, or a tutor, you would not have (as is usual) Latin and logic only in your thoughts. Learning must be had, but in the second place, as subservient only to greater qualities. Seek out somebody that may know how discreetly to frame his manners; place him in hands where you may, as much as possible, secure his innocence, cherish and nurse up the good, and gently correct and weed out any bad inclinations, and settle in him good habits. This is the main point; and this being provided for, learning may be had into the bargain, and that, as I think, at a very easy rate, by methods that may be thought on.

**§ 196** Besides what is to be had from study and books, there are other accomplishments necessary to a gentleman, to be got by exercise, and to which time is to be allowed, and for which masters must be had.

**Dancing** Dancing being that which gives graceful motions all the life, and, above all things, manliness and a becoming confidence to young children, I think it cannot be learned too early, after they are once of an age and strength capable of it. But you must be sure to have a good master, that knows, and can teach, what is graceful and becoming, and what gives a freedom and easiness to all the motions of the body. One that teaches not this is worse than none at all, natural unfashionableness being much better than apish, affected postures; and I think it much more passable to put off the hat, and make a leg, like an honest country gentleman, than like an ill-fashioned dancing-master. For, as for the jigging part, and the figures of dances, I count that little or nothing farther than as it tends to perfect graceful carriage.

**§ 197 Music** Music is thought to have some affinity with dancing, and a good hand, upon some instruments, is by many people mightily valued. But it wastes so much of a young man's time, to gain but a moderate skill in it, and engages often in such odd company, that many think it much better spared; and I have, amongst men of parts and business, so seldom heard any one commended or esteemed for having an excellency in music, that amongst all those things, that ever came into the list of accomplishments, I think I may give it the last place. Our short lives will not serve us for the attainment of all things; nor can our minds be always intent on something to be learned. The weakness of our constitutions, both of mind and body, requires that we should be often unbent: and he that will make a good use of any part of his life, must allow a large portion of it to recreation. At least this must not be denied to young people, unless, whilst you with too much haste make them old, you have the displeasure to set them in their graves, or a second childhood, sooner than you

could wish. And therefore I think that the time and pains allotted to serious improvements should be employed about things of most use and consequence, and that too in the methods the most easy and short, that could be at any rate obtained; and perhaps it would be none of the least secrets of education to make the exercises of the body and the mind, the recreation one to another. I doubt not but that something might be done in it, by a prudent man, that would well consider the temper and inclination of his pupil. For he that is wearied either with study or dancing, does not desire presently to go to sleep; but to do something else which may divert and delight him. But this must be always remembered, that nothing can come into the account of recreation that is not done with delight.

**§ 198 Fencing, and riding the great horse**, are looked upon as so necessary parts of breeding, that it would be thought a great omission to neglect them: the latter of the two, being for the most part to be learned only in great towns, is one of the best exercises for health which is to be had in those places of ease and luxury; and, upon that account, makes a fit part of a young gentleman's employment, during his abode there. And, as far as it conduces to give a man a firm and graceful seat on horseback, and to make him able to teach his horse to stop, and turn quick, and to rest on his haunches, is of use to a gentleman both in peace and war. But, whether it be of moment enough to be made a business of, and deserve to take up more of his time than should barely for his health be employed, at due intervals, in some such vigorous exercise, I shall leave to the discretion of parents and tutors; who will do well to remember, in all the parts of education, that most time and application is to be bestowed on that which is like to be of greatest consequence and frequent use, in the ordinary course and occurrences of that life the young man is designed for.

**§ 199 Fencing** As for fencing, it seems to me a good exercise for health, but dangerous to the life, the confidence of it being apt to engage in quarrels those that think they have some skill, and to make them often more touchy than needs, on points of honour, and slight provocations. Young men in their warm blood are forward to think they have in vain learned to fence if they never show their skill and courage in a duel; and they seem to have reason. But how many sad tragedies that reason has been the occasion of, the tears of many a mother can witness. A man that cannot fence will be more careful to keep out of bullies' and gamesters' company, and will not be half so apt to stand upon punctilios nor to give affronts, or fiercely justify them when given, which is that which usually makes the quarrel. And when a man is in the field, a moderate skill in fencing rather exposes him to the sword of his enemy, than secures him from it. And certainly a man of courage, who cannot fence at all, and therefore will put all upon one thrust, and not stand parrying, has the odds against a moderate fencer, especially if he has skill in wrestling. And therefore, if any provision be to be made against such accidents, and a man be to prepare his son for duels, I had much rather mine should be a good wrestler, than an ordinary fencer; which is the most a gentleman can attain to in it, unless he will be constantly in the fencing school, and every day exercising. But since fencing and riding the great horse are so generally looked upon as necessary qualifications in the breeding of a gentleman, it will be hard wholly to deny any one of that rank these marks of distinction. I shall leave it therefore to the father, to consider, how far the temper of his son, and the station he is like to be in, will allow or encourage him to comply with fashions, which, having very little to do with civil life, were yet formerly unknown to the most warlike nations; and seem to have added little of force or courage to those who have received them; unless we will think martial skill or prowess have been improved by duelling, with which fencing came into, and with which, I

presume, it will go out of the world.

**§ 200** These are my present thoughts concerning learning and accomplishments. The great business of all is virtue and wisdom. *Nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia* [No heavenly powers will lack where wisdom is].

Teach him to get a mastery over his inclinations, and submit his appetite to reason. This being obtained, and by constant practice settled into habit, the hardest part of the task is over. To bring a young man to this, I know nothing which so much contributes as the love of praise and commendation, which should therefore be instilled into him by all arts imaginable. Make his mind as sensible of credit and shame as may be: and when you have done that, you have put a principle into him which will influence his actions, when you are not by, to which the fear of a little smart of a rod is not comparable, and which will be the proper stock, whereon afterwards to graft the true principles of morality and religion.