

# FRANÇOIS FÉNELON

FENELON'S TREATISE ON  
THE EDUCATION OF  
DAUGHTERS

François Fénelon

**Fenelon's Treatise on the  
Education of Daughters**

«Public Domain»

**Fénelon F. d.**

Fenelon's Treatise on the Education of Daughters / F. d. Fénelon —  
«Public Domain»,

## Содержание

CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	10
CHAPTER IV	13
CHAPTER V	14
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	18

# François de Salignac de La Mothe- Fénelon Fenelon's Treatise on the Education of Daughters / Translated from the French, and Adapted to English Readers

## PREFACE

The Translation of the following Work was undertaken at the request of Mr. Ruff, the Publisher, who wished me to paraphrase what I thought might more particularly interest and edify the English reader.

It is dedicated, by the Publisher, to her Grace the Duchess of Bedford – and he is anxious that it may be found worthy of her patronage.

The original French work was first published in 1688; and the earliest English translation appeared in 1707. This translation, which was by Dr. Hickee, I have never seen. In the year 1797, another [anonymous] English translation was printed at Hull, in a duodecimo volume. In this performance there is so close an adherence to the idiom of the French language, that almost every page abounds with gallicisms. It is not, however, entirely destitute of merit; but it appears, on the whole, to have been hastily executed for the purpose of ensuring a cheap and extensive sale.

The present translation is offered to the public, with a full conviction of its inadequacy to give a just idea of the beauty and force of the original. The author of "*Telemaque*" and "*De l'Education des Filles*" appears, on a comparison of these two performances, very unlike the same writer. In the former, his periods are flowing and luxuriant; in the latter, they are sententious and logical; and nearly as difficult to clothe in an English-dress as those of the philosophical Tacitus.

It will be seen, therefore, that a literal translation has not been attempted; and a still greater deviation will be observable, from a wish to distinguish it from the translation of 1797. Whether this has always been done for the better, the reader will determine for himself.

The *Original Chapter* "on religious studies" has been submitted to those, whose opinions, matured by experience, I have been anxious to obtain; and it has received the sanction of their approbation.

If the Work fail of success, it will not be from the want of spirit in the Publisher; for it is accompanied with considerable beauty of type and paper, and elegance of ornament.

The *design* is every way worthy of the ingenious artist by whom it was executed, and who has long been known to the world from the taste and fidelity of his pencil. The engraving, by Mr. Freeman, will convince the public that he requires only to be known, to be more generally encouraged.

T. F. D.

Terrace, Kensington,  
June 2, 1805.

## CHAPTER I

### On the Importance of the Education of Daughters

The Education of Girls is, in general, exceedingly neglected:<sup>1</sup> custom, and maternal caprice, often appear to have the entire regulation of it. It absolutely seems as if we supposed the sex to be in need of little or no instruction. On the other hand, the Education of *Boys* is considered as a very important concern, affecting the welfare of the public; and although it be frequently attended with errors and mistakes, great abilities are nevertheless thought necessary for the accomplishment of it. The brightest talents have been engaged to form plans and modes of instruction: – What numbers of masters and colleges do we behold? What expences incurred in the printing of books, in researches after science, in modes of teaching languages, in the establishment of professors? All these grand preparations may probably have more shew than substance, but they sufficiently denote the high idea we entertain of the education of *Boys*. In regard to *Girls*, some exclaim, "why make them learned? curiosity renders them vain and conceited: it is sufficient if they be one day able to govern their families, and implicitly obey their husbands!" Examples are then adduced of many women whom science has rendered ridiculous; and on such contemptible authority we think ourselves justified in blindly abandoning our daughters to the conduct of ignorant and indiscreet mothers.

It is true, that we should be on our guard not to make them ridiculously learned. Women, in general, possess a weaker but more inquisitive mind than men; hence it follows that their pursuits should be of a quiet and sober turn. They are not formed to govern the state, to make war, or to enter into the church; so that they may well dispense with any profound knowledge relating to politics, military tactics, philosophy, and theology. The greater part of the mechanical arts are also improper for them: they are made for moderate exercise; their bodies as well as minds are less strong and energetic than those of men; but to compensate for their defects, nature has bestowed on them a spirit of industry, united with a propriety of behaviour, and an economy which renders them at once the ornament and comfort of home.<sup>2</sup>

But admitting that women are by nature weaker than men, what is the consequence? What, but that the weaker they are, the more they stand in need of support. Have they not duties to perform, which are the very foundation of human existence? Consider, it is women who ruin or uphold families; who regulate the *minutiae* of domestic affairs; and who consequently decide upon some of the dearest and tenderest points which affect the happiness of Man. They have undoubtedly the strongest influence on the manners, good or bad, of society. A sensible woman, who is industrious and religious, is the very soul of a large establishment, and provides both for its temporal and eternal welfare. Notwithstanding the authority of men in public affairs, it is evident, that they cannot effect any lasting good, without the intervention and support of women.

The *world* is not a phantom, it is *the aggregate of all its families*; and who can civilize and govern these with a nicer discrimination than women? besides their natural assiduity and authority at home, they are peculiarly calculated for it, by a carefulness, attention to particulars, industry, and a soft and persuasive manner. Can men promise themselves any felicity in this life, if marriage, the

---

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that the above sentiment was expressed in the year 1688, when the want of a good system of female education was universally felt and regretted. At the present day, we witness a noble reverse of things; and whatever theories may have, been proposed abroad, we can never cease to admire the labours, and applaud the sagacity, of *our* countrywomen in behalf of their sex.

<sup>2</sup> This idea is beautifully expressed in the following lines of Thomson: — "To give society its highest taste, Well-ordered home man's best delight to make; And by submissive wisdom, modest skill, With every gentle care-eluding art To raise the virtues, animate the bliss, And sweeten all the toils of human life: This be the female dignity and praise!" *Autumn*, ver. 602-608.

very essence of domestic society, be productive of bitterness and disappointment? and as to children, who are to constitute the future generation, to what misery will *they* be exposed, if their mothers ruin them from the cradle?

Such then, are the occupations of the female sex, which cannot be deemed of less importance to society than those of the male. It appears that they have a house and establishment to regulate, a husband to make happy, and children to rear. Virtue is as necessary for men as for women; and without entering upon the comparative good or ill which society experiences from the latter sex, it must be remembered that they are *one half of the human race*, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and destined to life eternal.

Lastly, let us not forget that if women do great good to the community when well educated, they are capable of infinite mischief when viciously instructed. It is certain that a bad education works less ill in a male, than in a female breast; for the vices of men often proceed from the bad education which their mothers have given them, and from passions which have been instilled into them at a riper age, from casual intercourse with women.

What intrigues does history present to us – what subversion of laws and manners – what bloody wars – what innovations in religion – what revolutions in states – all arising from the irregularities of women? Ought not these considerations to impress us with the importance of female education? Let us, therefore, discuss the various means of accomplishing so desirable an object.

## CHAPTER II

### Errors in the Ordinary Mode of Education

Ignorance is one of the causes of the *ennui* and discontent of young persons, and of the absence of all rational amusement. When a child has arrived at a certain age without having applied to solid pursuits, she can have neither taste nor relish for them. Every thing which is serious assumes to her mind a sorrowful appearance; and that which requires a continued attention, wearies and disgusts her. The natural inclination to pleasure, which is strong in youth – the example of young people of the same age, plunged in dissipation – every thing, in short, serves to excite a dread of an orderly and industrious life. In this early age, she wants both experience and authority to take a decided part in the management of household affairs; she is even ignorant of the important consequences resulting from it, unless her mother has previously instructed her in some of its departments. If she be born to affluence, she is not necessitated to undergo manual toil: she may probably work an hour or two a day, because she hears it said, without knowing why, that "it is proper for women to work" – but this pithy proverb will only produce the semblance, without the substance, of real useful application.

In such a situation what is she to do? The society of a mother, who narrowly watches, scolds, and thinks she is performing her duty in not overlooking the least fault – who is never satisfied, but always trying the temper, and appears herself immersed in domestic cares; all this disgusts and torments her. She is, moreover, surrounded with flattering servants, who, seeking to insinuate themselves, by base and dangerous compliances, gratify all her fancies, and direct her conversation to every topic but that of goodness and virtue. To her, piety appears an irksome task – a foe to every rational amusement. What, then, are her occupations? None that are useful. Hence arises a habit of indolence, which at length becomes incurable.

Meantime what is to fill this vacuity? Nothing but the most frivolous and contemptible pursuits. In such a state of lassitude, a young woman abandons herself to pure idleness; and idleness, which may be termed a languor of the soul, is an inexhaustible source of weariness and discontent. She sleeps one-third more than is necessary to preserve her health: this protracted slumber serves only to enervate and render her more delicate; more exposed to the turbulency of passion; whereas moderate sleep, accompanied with regular exercise, produces that cheerfulness, vigour, and elasticity of spirits, which form, perhaps, the true criterion of bodily and mental perfection.

This weariness and idleness, united with ignorance, beget a pernicious eagerness for public diversions; hence arises a spirit of curiosity, as indiscreet as it is insatiable.

Those who are instructed and busied in serious employments, have, in general, but a moderate curiosity. What they know gives them an indifference for many things of which they are ignorant; and convinces them of the inutility and absurdity of those things, with which narrow minds, that know nothing, and have nothing to exercise themselves upon, are extremely desirous of becoming acquainted.

On the contrary, young women, without instruction and application, have always a roving imagination. In want of substantial employment, their curiosity hurries them on to vain and dangerous pursuits. Those who have somewhat more vivacity, pique themselves on a superior knowledge, and read, with avidity, every book which flatters their vanity: they become enamoured of novels, plays, and "Tales of Wonder," in which love and licentiousness predominate: they fill their minds with visionary notions, by accustoming themselves to the splendid sentiments of heroes of romance, and hence are rendered unfit for the common intercourse of society; for all these fine airy sentiments, these generous passions, these adventures, which the authors of romance have invented for mere

amusement, have no connexion with the real motives which agitate mankind, and direct the affairs of the world; nor with those disappointments which usually accompany us in almost every thing we undertake.

A poor girl, full of the tender and the marvellous, which have delighted her in her reading, is astonished not to find in the world real personages, resembling the heroes she has read of – fain would she live like those imaginary princesses, whom fiction has described as always charming, always adored, and always beyond the reach of want. What disgust must she feel on descending from such a state of heroism, to the lowest offices of housewifery!

Some there are who push their curiosity still further, and without the least qualifications, presume to decide upon theological points. – But those who have not sufficient grasp of intellect for these curiosities, have other pursuits, better proportioned to their talents: they are extremely desirous of knowing what is said, and going on in the world – a song – news – an intrigue – to receive letters, and to read those that other people receive; these things delight prodigiously; they wish every thing to be told them, and to tell every thing in turn: they are vain, and vanity is a sure incentive to talk. They become giddy, and volatility prevents those reflections from rising which would shew them the value of silence.

## CHAPTER III

### Of the First Foundations of Education

To remedy the evils just complained of, it is of material consequence to commence a system of education from *Infancy*: this tender period, which is too often intrusted to imprudent and irregular women, is, in truth, the most susceptible of the strongest impressions, and consequently has a great influence on the future regulation of life.

As soon as children can lisp, they may be prepared for instruction: this may be thought paradoxical – but only consider what a child does before it can talk. It is learning a language which it will, by and by, speak with more accuracy, than the learned can speak the dead languages, although studied at a mature period of life. But what is the learning a language? It does not consist solely in treasuring in the memory a great number of words – but in comprehending, says St. Austin, the meaning of each particular word: the child, amidst its cries and amusements, knows for what object each word is designed: this is obtained sometimes by observing the natural motions of bodies which touch, or shew, the objects of which one is speaking – sometimes by being struck with the frequent repetition of the same word to signify the same thing. It cannot be denied but that the brain of children is admirably calculated, from its temperament, to receive impressions from all these images; but what strength of mental attention is requisite to distinguish them, and to unite each to its proper object?

Consider too, how children, even at such a tender age, attach themselves to those who flatter, and avoid those who restrain, them: how well they know to obtain their object by a tear, or silent submission: how much artifice and jealousy they already possess! "I have seen," exclaims St. Austin, "a jealous child: it could not speak; but its face was pale, and the eyes were irritated against an infant that suckled with it."

From this it may be inferred, that infants know more at such an early period than is usually imagined: thus, by soft words and appropriate gestures, you may incline them towards honest and virtuous connexions, rather than introduce them to those which it would be dangerous for them to caress. – Thus, again, you may, by appropriate looks and tone of voice, represent to them, with horror, those whom they have seen exasperated with anger, or any other furious passion; and, on the other hand, by a correspondent serenity of manner, depicture to them those who are amiable and wise.

I do not wish to lay too great a stress on these subordinate matters: but, in reality, these different dispositions form a commencement of character which must not be neglected; and this mode of foreseeing, as it were, the future dispositions of children, has imperceptible consequences which facilitate their education.

If we still doubt of the power of these early prepossessions on future maturity, we need only call to mind how lively and affecting, at an advanced age, is the remembrance of those things which have delighted us in childhood. If, instead of terrifying the minds of young people with absurd notions of ghosts and spirits, which serve only to weaken and disturb the still delicate texture of the brain: if, instead of abandoning them to the caprice of a nurse for what they are to like or dislike, we endeavoured always to impress on their minds an agreeable idea of good, and a frightful one of evil – this foresight might hereafter be the foundation of every practical virtue. On the contrary, we frighten them with the idea of a clergyman clothed in black – we talk of death merely to excite terror – and recount tales of the dead revisiting the earth, at midnight, under hideous shapes! All this has a tendency to weaken and agitate the mind, and to excite a prejudice against the soundest doctrines.

One of the most useful and important things during infancy is, to be particularly careful of the child's health; endeavouring to sweeten the blood by a proper choice of food, and a simple regimen

of life: regulating its meals, so that it eat pretty nearly at the same hours, and as it feels the inclination; that the stomach be not overloaded before digestion takes place, and that no high-seasoned dishes be introduced, which must necessarily give a disrelish for more healthful food. Lastly, too many dishes should not be allowed at the same time; for such a variety of food begets an appetite even after the real call of hunger is satisfied.

Another very important consideration is, not to oppress the faculties by too much instruction; to avoid every thing which may kindle the passions; to deprive a child, gently and by degrees, of that for which it has expressed too vehement a desire to obtain; so that, eventually, it may be insensible of disappointment.

If a child's disposition be tolerably good, it may, by the foregoing method, be rendered docile, patient, steady, cheerful, and tranquil; whereas, if its tender years be neglected, it becomes restless and turbulent during the remainder of its life; the blood boils, bad habits are formed, and the body and mind, both equally susceptible, become prone to evil. Hence arises a sort of second original sin, which, in advanced age, is the source of a thousand disorders.

As soon as children arrive at a more mature period, or their reason becomes unfolded, we must be careful that all our words have a tendency to make them love truth, and detest artifice and hypocrisy. We ought never to be guilty of any deception or falsehood to appease them, or to persuade them to comply with our wishes: if we are, we instruct them in cunning and artifice; and this they never forget. Reason and good sense must be our instruments of regulation.

But let us examine with a little more attention the exact dispositions of children, and what more particularly regards their treatment. The substance of their brain is soft, but it becomes harder every day: it has neither experience nor judgment to discriminate one object from another, and every thing is, therefore, new to them. From this softness and pliability of the brain, impressions are easily made; and the surprize which accompanies novelty, is the cause of their continual admiration, and extreme curiosity. It is true that this ductility of the brain, attended with considerable heat, produces an easy and constant motion; hence arises that bustle and volatility of youth, which is as incapable of fixing the attention on one object, as it is of confining the body to one spot.

Again, children are incapable of thinking and acting for themselves; they remark every thing, but speak little; unless they have been accustomed to talk much – an evil, against which we must be constantly on our guard. The pleasure which we derive and express from the sight of *pretty children*, spoils them; for they are, in consequence, accustomed to utter every thing which comes uppermost, and to talk on subjects of which they have no distinct ideas; hence is formed an habit of precipitately passing judgment, and of discussing points they are incapable of comprehending; an unfortunate circumstance! and which, probably, adheres to them through life.

This admiration of *pretty children* has another pernicious consequence; they are sensible that you look at them, watch all their actions, and listen to their prattle, with pleasure – hence they flatter themselves that all the world must follow your example.

During this period, when applause is perpetually bestowed, and contradiction seldom obtruded, children indulge chimerical hopes, which, alas! are the source of endless disappointments throughout life. I have seen children who always fancied you were talking about them, whenever any thing was privately said – and this, forsooth, because it has *sometimes* actually been the case: they have also imagined themselves to be most extraordinary and incomparable beings. Take care, therefore, that in your attentions to children, they are unconscious of any particular solicitude on your part: shew them that it is from pure regard, and the helplessness of their condition to relieve their own wants, that you interest yourself in their behalf – and not from admiration of their talents. Be content to form their minds, by degrees, according to each emergency that may arise: and if it were in your power to advance their knowledge much beyond their years, even without straining their intellect, by no means put it in practice; recollect that the danger of *vanity* and *arrogance* is always greater than the fruit of those premature educations which make so much noise in the world.

We must be satisfied to follow and assist nature. Children know little, and should not be stimulated to talk: but the consequence of this ignorance is, they are continually asking questions. We should, therefore, answer them precisely, and add sometimes little comparisons, which may throw light on the information we give them. If they judge of some things without sufficient knowledge, they should be checked by a new question, which might make them sensible of their error without rudely confounding them; at the same time take care to impress on their minds, not by vague praises, but by some effectual mark of esteem, that they afford much more satisfaction when they *doubt*, and *ask for information*, on points they do not know, than when they happen to decide rightly. This is the sure method to implant in them a true sense of modesty and politeness; and to excite a contempt for those idle controversies in which ignorant young folks are too apt to indulge.

As soon as we begin to watch the dawn of reason spreading, we should seize it as a favourable opportunity to guard them against presumption: "You see," we should exclaim, "that you are much more reasonable and tractable than you were last year – and in the *following* year you will observe things yet more clearly than you do at present – if, during the last year, you were eager to have passed judgment on things which you now know, and were then ignorant of, you would assuredly have judged wrong. You would therefore have been to blame in offering opinions on subjects above the reach of your intellect. There are, at this moment, many things which remain for you to know; and you will one day be convinced how imperfect are your *present* conceptions. Nevertheless, adhere to the counsel of those who judge of things as you yourself would judge, were you gifted with their years and experience."

As the curiosity of children is a faculty which precedes instruction, we should be careful to make them profit by it. For example, in the country when they see a mill, they wish to know what it is – here, then, you may shew them how that food is prepared which nourishes man. A little further they perceive reapers – and you must explain to them their occupation; how they sow the grain, and how it multiplies in the earth. In the town they see a number of shops, where various trades are exercised, and various merchandize is sold. Never consider their questions as importunate; they are overtures which nature makes to facilitate instruction – shew them, therefore, that you take pleasure in these questions – for, by such means, you teach them insensibly how every thing is made, which conduces to the comfort of man, and extension of commerce. By degrees, and without any particular study, they become acquainted with every article that is useful, and with the price affixed to each, which is, indeed, the true foundation of economy. This kind of knowledge, which no one should despise, because no one is willing to be cheated from the want of it, is particularly necessary for women.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Danger of Imitation

The ignorance of children, (in whose brain no correct impressions are made,) renders them extremely susceptible, and inclined to imitate every thing they see. It is, therefore, of consequence to set before them none but the very best models of imitation; and to make them acquainted with those, by whose examples they would be profited in following. But as it happens, in spite of all our precautions, that they occasionally witness many irregularities, we must not fail to warn them betimes against the impertinence of certain foolish and dissipated people, whose reputation is scarcely worth preserving: we must shew them how truly miserable and deserving of contempt, are those who abandon themselves to passion, without cultivating their reason. One may also give them, a correct taste, free from affectation, and make them sensible of the true value of modesty and decorum; we must not even abstain from guarding them against probable errors, although by this means we may open their eyes to certain defects in those whom they are taught to respect. We have neither right nor reason to hope that they will remain ignorant on such points, and therefore the best method to pursue, in order to keep them to their duty, is, to persuade them to bear with the faults of others; not to pass too severe a sentence on them, as they often appear greater than they really are – that they are even compensated for by many good qualifications – and that as there is no perfection in this world, they should admire that which approaches the nearest towards it. Lastly, although this advice should not be offered but in extreme cases, we should, nevertheless, engraft on them *true principles*, and preserve them from imitating all the evil that is set before them.

We must also be on our guard to prevent their imitation of *ridiculous people*; whose low and buffoon-like manners have something in them extremely revolting to noble and generous sentiments; we should be apprehensive lest children afterwards assume these very manners; as the warmth of their imagination, and pliability of body, added to the pleasure they seem to take in such diversion, gives them a peculiar aptitude to represent every ridiculous object they behold.

This proneness to imitation, which is natural to children, is the source of infinite mischief when they are delivered up to improper people who are hardly able to restrain themselves before them. But providence has ordained this imitative power, that children may be also capable of applying themselves to what is good and virtuous. Often, without speaking to them, we have only to *shew* them in others what we would have them do themselves.

## CHAPTER V

### **Indirect Instructions: we should not be too urgent with Children**

I think we should often make use of *indirect* instructions, which are not so tedious and uninteresting as lessons and remonstrances, in order to excite their attention to certain examples which are placed before them.

A person may sometimes ask another, in their presence, "Why do you do so" – and the other may answer – "I do it for such a reason." For example – "Why did you confess your fault?" "Because I should have been guilty of a much greater one by disavowing it with a lye" – and because nothing is more praiseworthy than to say frankly, "I am wrong." Then the first person should commend the one who has thus accused herself – but care must be taken that all this be done without art or affectation, for children have much more penetration than we are aware of – and as soon as they discover any finesse in their teachers, they lose that simplicity and confidence which is natural to their character.

We have before observed that the brain of children, from being at the same time moist and warm, produces continual motion. This softness or pliancy of the brain causes impressions to be easily made, and images of every sensible object to be vividly and strongly imprinted; hence we should be anxious to engrave, as it were, on their minds such characters as are easily formed. But great care must be shewn in the selection of such objects as we wish to impress: for in so small and precious a cabinet, none but the most exquisite furniture should be admitted. Let it be remembered, that at such a tender age, no knowledge should be engrafted but such as we wish to remain there for life. The first impressions that are made, when the brain is so soft and susceptible, are in general the most durable; and in proportion as age hardens the brain, do such impressions become indelible. Hence it is, that in old age we remember distinctly the images of youth, however remote; whereas as age advances we have a fainter recollection of such things as we progressively behold, because the impression has been made on the brain when it is gradually hardening, and filled with other images.

Although we understand how to reason in this manner, we have some difficulty in acceding to it: and yet we absolutely do make use of this very mode of reasoning. For instance, do we not say every day, "My habits are fixed, I am too old to change them, I have been brought up in this way." – Moreover are we not conscious of a singular pleasure in recalling to mind the images of youth? are not the strongest propensities formed at that age? Does not, therefore, all this prove that the first impressions and first habits are the strongest? If infancy be the fittest period for engraving such images on the brain, it must be allowed that it is the least so for the cultivation of reason. That ductility of the brain which causes impressions to be easily formed, being united with extreme heat, produces an agitation which sets all regular application at defiance.

The brain of children may be compared to a lighted wax taper, situated in a place which is exposed to the wind – its flame is perpetually flickering. A child asks you a question, and before you can answer, its eyes are directed towards the ceiling: it counts all the figures that are carved there, or all the bits of glass which compose the window: if you wish to bring it back to the first subject of discussion, you vex it as much as if you confined it in prison. Thus great care is required in managing the organs before they assume a determined inclination: answer every question promptly, and leave the child to put others as it pleases. Gratify only the curiosity which it evinces, and lay up in the memory a mass of sound materials. The time will come, when these impressions will be regularly arranged, and the brain having more consistency, the child will reason on the consequences. Nevertheless, be attentive to correct when the reasoning is fallacious; and to convince it, without embarrassment, as an opportunity offers, in what a wrong consequence consists.

Let a child amuse itself freely, and mingle instruction with amusement: let wisdom be introduced at proper intervals, and under an agreeable form; and take care not to fatigue it by a precision which is both formal and injudicious.

If a child entertains sad and dismal notions of virtue, if liberty and irregularity present themselves in a seducing manner, every thing is lost, and your labour is in vain. Never suffer it to be flattered by little contemptible associates, or people without character or worth: we naturally love the manners and sentiments of those whom we regard; and the pleasure which is sometimes taken in the company of disreputable people, begets, by degrees, a love of those pernicious habits which renders *them* so truly contemptible.

In order to conciliate children to people of real estimable character, make them reflect on their excellence and utility, their sincerity, their modesty, their disinterestedness, their fidelity, their discretion, but above all their *piety*, which is the foundation of the rest.

If a child has any thing about it revolting or offensive, you must observe to it that "piety does not produce such defects: when it is perfect, it destroys, or at least softens them." But, after all, we must not persist in making children admire certain pious characters whose exterior deportment is disgusting.

Although you are particularly anxious to regulate your own conduct with the utmost circumspection and nicety, do not imagine that children will fancy you faultless: oftentimes your slightest imperfections will be noticed by them.

St. Austin informs us that he had remarked, from his infancy, the vanity of his tutors. The best and most politic thing you can do, is, to know your own faults as completely as a child will know them, and to request some real friend to warn you of them. The generality of instructors pardon nothing in a pupil, but every thing in themselves: this excites an inquisitive and watchful spirit of malignity in such pupils – so that whenever they detect any fault in their tutor, they are delighted, and eventually despise him.

Shun this error: do not be afraid to mention the faults which are visible in your conduct, and which may have escaped you before the child. If you find her capable of reasoning thereupon, observe that you set her an example of correcting her faults, by the detection of your own – by this means, your imperfections will be instrumental in edifying the child, and encouraging her to correct herself. You will also thereby avoid the contempt and disgust which your own faults may cause her to entertain against your person.

Meanwhile, try every method to make those things agreeable which you exact from a child. Have you any thing crabbed or difficult to propose? convince her that this pain will be succeeded by pleasure: always shew the utility which results from your instructions; and make her sensible of the consequences as affecting mankind, and the different orders of society. Without this, all study will appear as a dry, barren, and thorny path. "Of what use," will children sometimes say to themselves, "is it to learn those things which do not relate to ordinary conversation, and which have no immediate connection with what we are *obliged* to do?"

We should therefore give them a reason for every thing we teach – "It is, we should observe, to enable you one day to do well in the world – it is to form your judgment, and to make you reason well on all the affairs of life." We should always represent to them some useful and solid *end*, which may support them in their application: and never pretend to keep them in subjection by a crabbed and absolute authority.

In proportion as their reason advances, we should discuss with them on the necessity of education; not that we should implicitly follow their thoughts, but profit by them when they discover their real state of mind: so that we may try their discernment, and make them relish those things we are anxious for them to learn.

Never assume, without urgent necessity, an austere and imperious manner, which only causes children to tremble, and savours strongly of affectation and pedantry in those who govern: children

are, for the greater part, timid and diffident. By such means you shut out all access to the heart, and deprive them of a confidence, without which no benefit can be derived from instruction. Make yourself beloved: let them be free with you, so that they fear nothing in discovering their faults. In order to attain this, be indulgent to those who do not disguise themselves before you. Appear neither astonished nor irritated at their bad propensities: on the contrary, bear with their foibles. This inconvenience may, however, sometimes arise, that they will be less intimidated; but, taking all things together, confidence and sincerity is of far greater utility than a rigorous discipline.

Besides, authority will lose its proper effect, if confidence and persuasion are not equally strong. Always commence with an open and candid manner; be cheerful and familiar without vulgarity, which enables you to see children conduct themselves in a perfectly natural state, and to know their inmost character. If even you should succeed in all your plans by the force of authority alone, you will not gain the proper end: you will disgust them in their search after goodness, of which you ought solely to endeavour to inspire them with admiration.

If the wisest man has recommended parents to hold the rod continually over the heads of their children, if he has said that a father who "spareth his child" will repent it hereafter – it does not follow that he has censured a mild and lenient mode of education. He only condemns those weak and inconsiderate parents who flatter the passions of their children, and who only strive to divert them in their infancy, so that they are guilty of all sorts of excess. The proper conclusion seems to be that parents ought to preserve authority sufficient for correction; for there are some dispositions which require to be subdued by fear alone; but let it be remembered that this should never be enforced unless every other expedient has been previously applied.

A child who merely follows the capricious impulse of imagination, and who confounds every thing which presents itself to her mind, detests application and virtue, because she has taken a prejudice against the person who speaks to her concerning them.

Hence arises that dismal and frightful idea of religion, which she preserves all her life: and which, alas! is often the only wretched remnant of a severe system of education. We must frequently tolerate many things which are deserving of immediate punishment, and wait for the opportunity when the feelings of a child dispose it to profit by correction.

Never rebuke a child in the first moments of passion, whether on your side or hers. If on yours, she will perceive that, you conduct yourself according to caprice and resentment, and not according to reason and affection: you will, in consequence, irretrievably lose your authority. If you correct in the first gust of her passion, her mind is not sufficiently collected to confess her fault, to conquer her feelings, and to acknowledge the importance of your advice: such a mode may even hazard your pupil's respect for you. Always let the child see you are mistress of your own feelings; and nothing can effect this so much as *patience*. Watch every moment, each day, when correction may be well-timed. Never tell her of a fault, without, at the same time, suggesting some mode of redressing it, which will induce her to put it in practice; for nothing is more to be avoided than that chagrin and discouragement which are the consequence of mere formal correction. If a child is discovered to be a little rational, I think you should win it insensibly to *wish* to have its faults disclosed, as this would be the way of making it sensible of them, without causing affliction: never, however, recount too many faults at a time.

We should consider that children have a tender intellect, that their age makes them susceptible chiefly of pleasure, and that we often expect from them a correctness and seriousness of deportment, which their instructors are sometimes incapable of evincing. A very dangerous impression of *ennui* and sadness is produced on their mind, by perpetually talking to them of words and things which they do not understand: no liberty, no amusement! always lesson, silence, constraint, correction, and threats!

Our ancient forefathers knew better. It was by the charm of verses and music that the Hebrews, Egyptians, and Greeks, introduced the principal sciences, the maxims of virtue, and the politeness

of manners. Without reading, people scarcely believe these things, so distant are they from present custom! nevertheless, little as history is known, there is not a doubt but that this was the common practice for many centuries. However, let us so far correct our own age, as to unite the agreeable and the useful together, as much as lay in our power.

But although we can hardly hope to lay aside *awe* with the generality of children, whose dispositions are headstrong and untractable, we should, nevertheless, not have recourse to it without having patiently tried every other experiment. We should even make them distinctly understand the extent of our demands, allowing a certain medium with which we should be satisfied: for good-humour and confidence should be their natural disposition – otherwise we damp their spirit, and daunt their courage: if they are lively, we irritate; if dull, we stupify them. – Fear may be compared to violent remedies employed in extreme cases – they purge, but they alter the temperament, and reduce the organs to extremity. A mind governed by fear, is generally the weaker for it.

We should not always menace without chastising, for fear of rendering menace of no avail; but we should menace more frequently than we chastise. As to chastisement, the pain inflicted ought to be as slight as possible – but accompanied with every circumstance which can prick the child with shame and remorse. For example, shew her every thing you have done to avoid coming to this unpleasant extremity – appear to be even affected at it – speak to her, in the presence of others, of the melancholy state of those whose want of reason and good conduct have forced correction upon them; and keep back the ordinary marks of reconciliation, till you see she stands in need of consolation. This chastisement may be either public or private, as it may benefit the child – either in covering her with shame, or shewing her how she has been spared such a mortification – a *public* exposition should, however, never be resorted to but in the last extremity. It may be as well sometimes to make use of a rational person to perform the office of mediator – who might console the child, and mention such things which would be improper for yourself to do – who might cure her of false shame, and induce her to come to you for reconciliation – and to whom the child, in the emotions of her heart, would open herself more freely than she would dare to do to yourself. Above all, let it be manifest that you never exact from a child more than necessary submission: endeavour to effect it so that she may pass her own condemnation, and that you have little else to do but assuage the anguish she has herself inflicted. General rules ought to be adopted as particular occasions may justify: men, and especially children, do not always resemble themselves – that which is good to-day, may be bad to-morrow; a conduct stubbornly uniform can never be advantageous.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.