

SOME

Ann Currie

THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION.

*Doctrina vires promovet insitas,
Rectique cultus pectora roborant :
Utcunque defecere mores,
Dedecorant bene nata culpæ.*

HOR. L. IV. Od. 4.

By JOHN LOCKE, Esq;

THE FOURTEENTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXII.

T O

EDWARD CLARKE,

Of CHIPLEY, Esq;

SIR,

THES E Thoughts concerning Education, which now come abroad into the World, do of Right belong to You, being written several Years since for Your Sake, and are no other than what You have already by You in my Letters. I have so little varied any thing, but only the Order of what was sent you at different Times, and on several Occasions, that the Reader will easily find, in the Familiarity and Fashion of the Stile, that they were rather the private Conversation of two Friends, than a Discourse designed for publick View.

The Importunity of Friends is the common Apology for Publications Men are afraid to own themselves forward to. But you know I can truly say, that if some, who having heard of these Papers of mine, had not pressed to see them, and afterwards to have them printed, they had lain dormant still in that Privacy they were designed for. But those, whose Judgment I defer much to, telling me, that they were persuaded, that this rough Draught of mine

The Epistle Dedicatory.

might be of some Use, if made more publick, touched upon what will always be very prevalent with me: For I think it every Man's indispensable Duty, to do all the Service he can to his Country; and I see not what Difference he puts between himself and his Cattle, who lives without that Thought. This Subject is of so great Concernment, and a right Way of Education is of so general Advantage, that did I find my Abilities answer my Wishes, I should not have needed Exhortations or Importunities from others. However, the Meanness of these Papers, and my just Distrust of them, shall not keep me, by the Shame of doing so little, from contributing my Mite, when there is no more required of me, than my throwing it into the publick Receptacle. And if there be any more of their Size and Notions, who liked them so well, that they thought them worth printing, I may flatter myself they will not be lost Labour to every Body.

I myself have been consulted of late by so many, who profess themselves at a Loss how to breed their Children, and the early Corruption of Youth is now become so general a Complaint, that he cannot be thought wholly impertinent, who brings the Consideration of this Matter on the Stage, and offers something, if it be but to excite others, or afford Matter of Correction: For Errors in Education should be less indulged than any. These, like Faults in the first Concoction, that are never mended in the second or third, carry their afterwards incorrigible

The Epistle Dedicatory.

corrigible Taint with them, thro' all the Parts and Stations of Life.

I am so far from being conceited of any thing I have here offered, that I should not be sorry, even for your Sake, if some one abler and fitter for such a Task would, in a just Treatise of Education, suited to our English Gentry, rectify the Mistakes I have made in this; it being much more desirable to me, that young Gentlemen should be put into (that which every one ought to be solicitous about) the best Way of being formed and instructed, than that my Opinion should be received concerning it. You will, however, in the mean Time bear me Witness, that the Method, here proposed, has had no ordinary Effects upon a Gentleman's Son it was not designed for. I will not say the good Temper of the Child did not very much contribute to it; but this I think You and the Parents are satisfied of, that a contrary Usage, according to the ordinary disciplining of Children, would not have mended that Temper, nor have brought him to be in Love with his Book, to take a Pleasure in Learning, and to desire, as he does, to be taught more than those about him think fit always to teach him.

But my Business is not to recommend this Treatise to You, whose Opinion of it I know already; nor it to the World, either by your Opinion or Patronage. The well Educating of their Children is so much the Duty and Concern of Parents, and the Welfare and Prosperity of the Nation so much depends on it, that I would have

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every one lay it seriously to Heart ; and after having well examined and distinguished what Fancy, Custom, or Reason advises in the Case, set his helping Hand to promote every where that Way of training up Youth, with Regard to their several Conditions, which is the easiest, shortest, and likeliest to produce virtuous, useful, and able Men in their distinct Callings ; tho' that most to be taken Care of, is the Gentleman's Calling ; for if those of that Rank are by their Education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into Order.

I know not whether I have done more than shewn my good Wishes towards it in this short Discourse. Such as it is, the World now has it ; and if there be any Thing in it worth their Acceptance, they owe their Thanks to You for it. My Affection to You gave the first Rise to it, and I am pleased, that I can leave to Posterity this Mark of the Friendship that has been between us ; for I know no greater Pleasure in this Life, nor a better Remembrance to be left behind one, than a long-continued Friendship with an honest, useful, and worthy Man, and Lover of his Country. I am,

S I R,

Your most humble,

March 7,
1690.

and most faithful Servant,

JOHN LOCKE.

T H E

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may tempt them to it, and so take Books only for fashionable Amusements, or impertinent Troubles good for nothing.

§. 157. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and Ten Commandments, it is necessary he should learn perfectly by Heart; but, I think, not by reading them himself in his Primer, but by somebody's repeating them to him, even before he can read. But learning by heart, and *learning to read*, should not, I think, be mixed, and so one made to clog the other; but his *learning to read* should be made as little Trouble or Business to him as might be.

What other Books there are in *English* of the Kind of those above-mentioned, fit to engage the Liking of Children, and tempt them to *read*, I do not know, but am apt to think, that Children, being generally delivered over to the Method of Schools, where the Fear of the Rod is to inforce, and not any Pleasure of the Employment to invite them to learn, this Sort of useful Books, amongst the Number of silly ones that are of all Sorts, have yet had the Fate to be neglected; and nothing that I know has been considered of this Kind out of the ordinary Road of the Horn-Book, Primer, Psalter, Testament, and Bible.

§. 158. As for the *Bible*, which Children are usually employed in to exercise and improve their Talent *in reading*, I think, the
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promiscuous Reading of it, though by Chapters as they lie in Order, is so far from being of any Advantage to Children, either for the perfecting their *Reading*, or principing their Religion, that perhaps a worse could not be found : For what Pleasure or Encouragement can it be to a Child to exercise himself in reading those Parts of a Book where he understands nothing ? And how little are the Law of *Moses*, the Song of *Solomon*, the Prophecies in the Old, and the Epistles and *Apocalypse* in the New Testament, suited to a Child's Capacity ? And though the History of the Evangelists, and the Acts, have something easier, yet, taken all together, it is very disproportional to the Understanding of Childhood. I grant, that the Principles of Religion are to be drawn from thence, and in the Words of the Scripture ; yet none should be proposed to a Child, but such as are suited to a Child's Capacity and Notions. But it is far from this, to read through *the whole Bible*, and that for Reading's sake. And what an odd Jumble of Thoughts must a Child have in his Head, if he have any at all, such as he should have concerning Religion, who in his tender Age reads all the Parts of the *Bible* indifferently as the Word of God, without any other Distinction ! I am apt to think, that this, in some Men, has been the very Reason why they never had clear
and

and distinct Thoughts of it all their Life Time.

§. 159. And now I am by chance fallen on this Subject, give me leave to say, that there are some Parts of the *Scripture* which may be proper to be put into the Hands of a Child to engage him to read; such as are the Story of *Joseph* and his Brethren, of *David* and *Goliath*, of *David* and *Jonathán*, &c. and others, that he should be made to read for his Instruction, as that, *What you would have others do unto you, do you the same unto them*; and such other easy and plain moral Rules, which being fitly chosen might often be made use of, both for Reading and Instruction together; and so often read, till they are thoroughly fixed in the Memory; and then afterwards, as he grows ripe for them, may in their Turns, on fit Occasions, be inculcated as the standing and sacred Rules of his Life and Actions. But the Reading of the whole *Scripture* indifferently, is what I think very inconvenient for Children, till after having been made acquainted with the plainest fundamental Parts of it, they have got some kind of general View of what they ought principally to believe and practise; which yet, I think, they ought to receive in the very Words of the *Scripture*, and not in such as Men, prepossessed by Systems and Analogies, are apt in this Case to make use of and force upon them.

them. Dr. *Worthington*, to avoid this, has made a Catechism, which has all its Answers in the precise Words of the Scripture, a Thing of good Example, and such a sound Form of Words as no Christian can except against, as not fit for his Child to learn. Of this, as soon as he can say the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and ten Commandments by Heart, it may be fit for him to learn a Question every Day, or every Week, as his Understanding is able to receive, and his Memory to retain them. And when he has this Catechism perfectly by Heart, so as readily and roundly to answer to any Question in the whole Book, it may be convenient to lodge in his Mind the remaining moral Rules scattered up and down in the Bible, as the best *Exercise of his Memory*, and that which may be always a Rule to him, ready at Hand, in the whole Conduct of his Life.

§. 160. When he can read *English Writing* well, it will be seasonable to enter him in *Writing*: And here the first Thing should be taught him is to *hold his Pen right*; and this he should be perfect in before he should be suffered to put it to Paper: For not only Children, but any Body else, that would do any thing well, should never be put upon too much of it at once, or be set to perfect themselves in two Parts of an Action at the same Time, if they can possibly