

William SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (1608), Act I, scene III.

Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA, mother and wife to MARTIUS.
They set them down on two low stools, and sew.

VOLUMNIA

5 I pray you, daughter, sing; or express yourself in a more comfortable sort. If my son were
my husband I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour, than in the
embracements of his bed, where he would show most love. When yet he was but tender-
bodied, and the only son of my womb; when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his
way; when for a day of kings' entreaties, a mother should not sell him an hour from her
10 beholding; I, considering how honour would become such a person—that it was no better
than picture-like to hang by th'wall, if renown made it not stir—was pleased to let him
seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him, from whence he
returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first
hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

15 **VIRGILIA**

But had he died in the business, madam; how then?

VOLUMNIA

Then his good report should have been my son, I therein would have found issue. Hear
me profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than
20 thine and my good Martius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one
voluptuously surfeit out of action.

Enter a Gentlewoman.

25 **GENTLEWOMAN**

Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIRGILIA

Beseech you give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA

30 Indeed, you shall not.
Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum;
See him pluck Aufidius down by th'hair,
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him.
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:

35 ‘Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,
Though you were born in Rome.’ His bloody brow
With his mail’d hand then wiping, forth he goes
Like to a harvest man that’s task’d to mow
Or all, or lose his hire.

40 **VIRGILIA**
His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOLUMNIA
Away you fool! it more becomes a man
Than gilt his trophy. The breasts of Hecuba,
45 When she did suckle Hector, look’d not lovelier
Than Hector’s forehead when it spit forth blood
At Grecian sword contemning. Tell Valeria
We are fit to bid her welcome.

Exit Gentlewoman.

VIRGILIA
50 Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

VOLUMNIA
He’ll beat Aufidius’ head below his knee,
And tread upon his neck.

55 *Enter VALERIA, with an Usher and Gentlewoman.*

VALERIA
My ladies both, good day to you.

VOLUMNIA
60 Sweet madam.

VIRGILIA
I am glad to see your ladyship.

VALERIA
How do you both? you are manifest housekeepers. What are you sewing here? A fine
65 spot, in good faith. How does your little son?

VIRGILIA
I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

VOLUMNIA
He had rather see the swords, and hear a drum, than look upon his school-master.

70 **VALERIA**
O’my word, the father’s son! I’ll swear, ’tis a very pretty boy. O’my troth, I looked upon
him o’Wednesday half an hour together: ’has such a confirmed countenance. I saw him
run after a gilded butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again;

and over and over he comes, and again; caught it again; or whether his fall enraged him,
75 or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it. Oh, I warrant how he mammocked it!

VOLUMNIA

One on's father's moods.

VALERIA

Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

80 **VIRGILIA**

A crack, madam.

VALERIA

Come, lay aside your stitchery; I must have you play the idle husewife with me this
afternoon.

85 **VIRGILIA**

No, good madam; I will not out of doors.

VALERIA

Not out of doors!

VOLUMNIA

90 She shall, she shall.

VIRGILIA

Indeed no, by your patience; I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars.

VALERIA

Fie, you confine yourself most unreasonably. Come, you must go visit the good lady that
95 lies in.

VIRGILIA

I will wish her speedy strength, and visit her with my prayers; but I cannot go thither.

VOLUMNIA

Why, I pray you?

100 **VIRGILIA**

'Tis not to save labour, nor that I want love.

VALERIA

You would be another Penelope; yet they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence
did but fill Ithaca full of moths. Come; I would your cambric were sensible as your
105 finger, that you might leave pricking it for pity. Come, you shall go with us.

VIRGILIA

No, good madam, pardon me; indeed, I will not forth. [...]

John LOCKE (1632-1704), *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693)

5 One thing I have frequently observ'd in children, that when they have got possession
of any poor creature, they are apt to use it ill: they often *torment*, and treat very roughly,
young birds, butterflies, and such other poor animals which fall into their hands, and that with
a seeming kind of pleasure. This I think should be watched in them, and if they incline to any
such cruelty, they should be taught to contrary usage. For the custom of tormenting and
10 killing of beasts, will, by degrees, harden their minds even towards men; and they who delight
in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate
or benign to those of their own kind. Our practice takes notice of this in the exclusion of
butchers from juries of life and death. Children should from the beginning be bred up in an
abhorrence of *killing* or tormenting any living creature; and be taught not to *spoil* or destroy
any thing, unless it be for the preservation or advantage of some other that is nobler. And
15 truly, if the preservation of all mankind, as much as in him lies, were every one's persuasion,
as indeed it is every one's duty, and the true principle to regulate our religion, politics and
morality by, the world would be much quieter, and better natur'd than it is. But to return to
our present business; I cannot but commend both the kindness and prudence of a mother I
knew, who was wont always to indulge her daughters, when any of them desired dogs,
20 squirrels, birds, or any such things as young girls use to be delighted with: but then, when
they had them, they must be sure to keep them well, and look diligently after them, that they
wanted nothing, or were not ill used. For if they were negligent in their care of them, it was
counted a great fault, which often forfeited their possession, or at least they fail'd not to be
rebuked for it; whereby they were early taught diligence and good nature. And indeed, I think
25 people should be accustomed, from their cradles, to be tender to all sensible creatures, and to
spoil or *waste* nothing at all.

This delight they take in *doing of mischief*, whereby I mean spoiling of any thing to no
purpose, but more especially the pleasure they take to put any thing in pain, that is capable of
it; I cannot persuade my self to be any other than a foreign and introduced disposition, an
30 habit borrowed from custom and conversation. People teach children to strike, and laugh
when they hurt or see harm come to others: and they have the examples of most about them,
to confirm them in it. All the entertainment and talk of history is nothing almost but fighting
and killing: and the honour and renown that is bestowed on conquerors (who for the most part
are but the great butchers of mankind) farther mislead growing youth, who by this means
35 come to think slaughter the laudable business of mankind, and the most heroic of virtues. By
these steps unnatural cruelty is planted in us; and what humanity abhors, custom reconciles
and recommends to us, by laying it in the way to honour. Thus, by fashion and opinion, that
comes to be a pleasure, which in itself neither is, nor can be any. This ought carefully to be
watched, and early remedied; so as to settle and cherish the contrary and more natural temper
40 of benignity and *compassion* in the room of it; but still by the same gentle methods which are
to be applied to the other two faults before mention'd. It may not perhaps be unreasonable
here to add this farther caution, *viz.*, That the mischiefs or harms that come by play,
inadvertency, or ignorance, and were not known to be harms, or design'd for mischief's sake,
though they may perhaps be sometimes of considerable damage, yet are not at all, or but very
45 gently, to be taken notice of. For this, I think, I cannot too often inculcate, that whatever
miscarriage a child is guilty of, and whatever be the consequence of it, the thing to be
regarded in taking notice of it, is only what root it springs from, and what habit it is like to

50 establish: and to that the correction ought to be directed, and the child not to suffer any punishment for any harm which may have come by his play or inadvertency. The faults to be amended lie in the mind; and if they are such as either age will cure, or no ill habits will follow from, the present action, whatever displeasing circumstances it may have, is to be passed by without any animadversion.

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CODE SUJET : EHP

Anthony VAN DYCK, *The Five Eldest Children of Charles I* (1637)
Oil on canvas, 163.2 x 198.8 cm, Her Majesty The Queen (The Royal Collection Trust)

