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**

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 embraces 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 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.

**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 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.*

**Gentlewoman**

Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

**Virgilia**

Beseech you give me leave to retire myself.

**Volumnia**

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:
‘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.

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,  
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  
Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

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

Enter Valeria, with an Usher and Gentlewoman.

Valeria  
My ladies both, good day to you.

Volumnia  
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  
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.

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, 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.

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VIRGILIA
A crack, madam.

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

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

VALERIA
Not out of doors!

VOLUMNIA
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 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?

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 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)

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 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 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, 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 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 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 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 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 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
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.
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)