

portion of them, the less likely will it be to sink under those burdens which will one day be imposed upon it. To lead a child to suppose that he is to do nothing which is not conducive to pleasure, is to give him a degree of levity, and a turn for dissipation, which will certainly prevent his improvement, and may perhaps occasion his ruin.

It is not rigid to explode those fanciful modes of instruction which injure, while they indulge the inexperienced pupil. But it would be rigid not to unite the agreeable with the useful, whenever the union can be effected. Books, therefore, written for the use of children, should be rendered pleasing to the eye and to the imagination. They should abound in cuts,† and should be adorned with gilding, and every attractive colour. The matter should be not only intelligible to the weakest capacity, but interesting. Fables are universally used, and with great propriety. No one wants to be informed how many, and how various, are the books in our language adapted to the use of children. Even the common spelling books, though they exhibit no great ingenuity in their compilation,‡ are sufficiently well calculated to teach the art of reading, and have been instrumental in

teaching by far the greater part of the nation, from their first appearance. A poetess of our own times, remarkably distinguished by her taste and genius, has condescended to compose little books for the imitation of children in reading, and they seem well adapted to effect her laudable purpose.

The greatest objection to the very early instruction which I recommend is, that when injudiciously directed, it may injure the health of the tender pupil. But it may certainly be so conducted, as neither to injure health,§ nor to preclude that lovely cheerfulness which marks and adorns the vernal season of life. All corporal punishment,|| and all immoderate restraint, must be prohibited. Praise, caresses, and rewards, are the best incitements to application. If these will not operate, the point must for a while be given up. A more favourable season will soon arrive, under proper management. These motives, however, will seldom fail, when applied by the parents, or by those who with the real interest of the child at heart, have also integrity and diligence to promote it. Such qualities are certainly more desirable in the first instructors, than learning and great abilities.**

* At first a plain alphabet, clearly and distinctly printed on fine paper, is the most advisable; for the child will not look at the letter when there is a print of some more amusing object at its side. When it can read a little, so as to know something of the meaning of the prints, then they are proper.

† If they were printed on a better type and paper, I think they might supersede the use of all other initiatory compilations. Learning is under greater obligations than she is willing to allow to Messrs. Dilworth and Dyché, and other most useful, though not very illustrious, authors of spelling books.

‡ Mrs. Barbauld, whose condescension in writing these little books, is not less amiable than her ingenuity.

§ There is nothing to hinder a child from acquiring every useful branch of knowledge, and every elegant accomplishment suited to his age, WITHOUT IMPAIRING HIS CONSTITUTION; but then the greatest attention must be had to the powers of the body and the mind, that they neither be allowed to LANGUISH FOR WANT OF EXERCISE, nor be exerted beyond what they can bear.

Dr. GREGORY.

This amiable writer has, however, used some arguments, which I fear, will induce very indulgent parents to put off the instruction too long. What he says is plausible. But I think he uses some arguments which I shall call *argumenta ad matrem*.

|| Correct your LITTLE ONE by winning arts

Of soft persuasion; but forbear to grieve

His tender heart.

MENANDER.

** *Quidam literis instituendos, qui minores septem annis essent, non putaverunt, quod illa prima ætas et intellectum disciplinarum capere, et laborem pati non possit.*

Quid melius aliqui facient, ex quo loqui poterunt? Facient enim aliquid necesse est. Aut cur hoc, quantumcumque est, usque ad septem annos lucrum subsidiamus? Nam cerè quantumlibet parum sit quod contuleris ætati prior, majora tamen aliqua discet puer ex ipso anno, quo minoræ didicisset. Hoc per singulos annos prorogatum in summam proficit; et, quantum in infantia præsumptum est temporis, adolescentiæ acquiritur.

Non ergo perdamus primum statim tempus; atque eo minus, quod initia literarum solè memoria constant; quæ non modo jam est in parvis, sed tum etiam tenacissima est.

Some have thought that none should be instructed in letters who are under seven years of age, because that early period can neither comprehend learning nor endure labour.

But