

EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Batty's *The Christian man's closet* (pp. 182–3) was translated into English in 1581, with a dedication to the translator's patrons, Thomas and Brian D'Arcy, which argued that one of the purposes of the translation was the circulation of training and instruction through the agency of fathers:

And for that your worshipps are fathers of many children (which I am persuaded are daily beloved unto you), and masters of great families, whereof I know you have care to be virtuously instructed, guided, governed and trained up in the fear of God.

It is notable that a humanist educational treatise, with the expressed aim of furthering 'the godly training up of children' should be addressed solely to the male householder as responsible for the welfare and education of the children. The book is set out as a dialogue between Theophilus, Theodidactus and Mattina, the mother, although in the small part of the text devoted to girls' education, the mother is not given a part in the discussion. Education, its theory and practice, is a battle-ground in any society: humanism made education central to a social revolution where a centralised state, overseen by a powerful, if enlightened, magistrate, was served by highly educated and functional civil servants and diplomats. Grammar schools were instituted to educate boys for this life of public service. During the sixteenth century many of these schools developed specific bans on girls either attending at all, or attending once they reached the age of nine.¹

In this radical redefinition of its content and function, education was no longer simply a clerical affair. Women actually had fewer educational opportunities than under Catholicism and feudalism where women might receive vocational education for life as a nun or, for aristocratic women, be sent to another large household to learn the skills necessary to help manage a landed estate with a future husband. One of the eventual consequences of the humanist educational revolution was to intensify the developing split between men's public function and place and women's private function and place. The Christian educational curriculum and aim remained

the model for educating girls. Thus *Vives' Instruction of a Christian woman* (pp. 168–71), often hailed as a liberal treatise advocating a careful and structured educational programme for girls and women, still bases both his educational philosophy and curriculum on the texts of the Christian Fathers, such as Jerome's letters to Eustochium and Furia, Tertullian's *De cultu feminarum* or St Cyprian's *De habitu virginum*. These advocate education in the virtues of modesty and obedience, with reading as a subsidiary private pastime, in contradistinction to the humanist programme of classical and pagan reading and learning recommended for boys (see pp. 183–6 also).²

Nevertheless, one of the modern myths about humanism,³ which has been difficult to dispel, is that Renaissance English women during the sixteenth century benefited from humanist educational theories and revolutions. The career of learned women of sixteenth-century England is illustrative. There were some exceptionally well-educated women in the public eye: Margaret More (later Margaret Roper) as the daughter of Thomas More; Mary and Elizabeth Tudor; Lady Jane Grey; and the three Cooke sisters, who all married prominent public men (Elizabeth, Anne, and Mildred to Thomas Hobbes, Nicholas Bacon and William Cecil respectively). These women were extensively educated in humanist texts and methods and most of them produced their own translations of theological works, yet few of them voluntarily published that writing. Anne and Elizabeth Cooke's were published in their names and dedicated to their mother and daughter respectively, thus maintaining the fiction of a closed female readership. All other work was published anonymously and by the men in their lives. Where the women did express a private view about the function of their humanist education, it was firmly placed within a framework of marital subjection and the acquisition of chaste, wifely virtues. Richard Hynde's preface to Margaret Roper's translation of Erasmus's *A devout treatise upon the paternoster* (pp. 173–5) is a case in point. Roper does not speak overtly in her own voice at any point in the translation or the publication: instead Hynde's preface uses her translation as a platform for reinforcing norms for feminine behaviour through education. He argues, for example, that women's education is crucially important, but only so that marriage can be more perfect. Thus the potentially radical agenda of educational humanism is appropriated to the conventional model of femininity. This is a mode of argumentation which is used over one hundred years later by Bathshua Makin in her plea for women's education (pp. 186–91). Thus even where the content of women's own work shows a desire for equal access to educational opportunities, those opportunities are only defined in exact reference to woman's conventional social function. There is perhaps less contrast than many have thought between the assertions of Salter and others (pp. 177–8) who argue that woman's physiology unfits her for intellectual knowledge, and those who argue she is man's intellectual equal (or near enough), but that her education must be channelled into the single purpose for which she was created: namely, the work of marriage.

Not only were there very few articulate, educated women during the sixteenth century,⁴ but there was no great shift of educational policy for women.⁵ Indeed, it is possible to say that medieval Catholicism provided more opportunities for female education through nunneries and the valuation of the scholarly life of a nun, than did early modern Protestantism. The most radical plea for female education represented here, is that by the Catholic Mary Ward (chapter 7, pp. 206–7): she asks the pope for permission to establish an educational nunnery, with the aim of providing educated Catholic women in order to further the conversion of England. The one specific plea for structured female Protestant education in sixteenth-century England, made by Becon in his *Catechism* (pp. 176–7), is framed within the ideological structure and discourses which construct femininity and was ignored by all his contemporaries.

Protestant writing on education for girls focused on two specific aims: the cultivation of virtue and the development of the skills of housewifery. The former was principally defined as the avoidance of the sin of pride and cultivation of the virtue of chastity, which are also specifically angled towards the girl's one function in life: to become a wife and mother (pp. 168–71, 177–8, 186–91). The curriculum for girls reflects this in its emphasis on biblical and theological readings, alongside practical skills such as weaving, sewing, basic medical knowledge, singing and dancing, and in the frequent dire warnings against girls being allowed to read medieval romances or classical love poetry (pp. 169–71, 178). The texts in chapters 3, 4 and 7 on conduct, motherhood and work in this collection are all aimed also at educating girls in their true purpose. Unlike the realm of motherhood or theology, educational writing does not, however, give women a discrete space in which specific women's interest and identity can be developed: educational aims and curriculum are part of the gendered hierarchy of explicit political patriarchal practice and theory. It is this fact which makes education a key area for early feminism: it is both the means whereby and the place where equality is sought.

Literacy levels are a good measure of the indifference of the intellectual revolutions of humanism and Protestantism to women's education: despite the humanist aim of literacy for women, their curricula made it clear such education was only for the high-born, and for use only within the private domain. Reading and writing was taught at dame schools, but only for those who had the money and leisure to afford it. Literacy levels remained much lower for women than for men during this period, as they were far lower for those of lower social status. Female illiteracy has been estimated at 90 per cent in the 1640s, with male rates at 70 per cent, dropping to 70 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively, in the early eighteenth century, although the measures used have been much debated: women who could not sign their name, for example, may well have been able to read, or to understand accounts.⁶ Similarly, although there were, increasingly, both day and boarding schools for young women during the seventeenth century, for example the one which Makin herself advertises at the end of her *Essay to revive the ancient*

learning (pp. 186–91), their curriculum and clientele were limited by the aims for which girls' education was circumscribed and by social status, respectively. More so than for boys, where the grammar schools at least theoretically provided scholarships for bright boys from poor families, education for girls was limited to the aristocracy, gentry and middle ranks.

Girls and women, therefore, were imprisoned within an ideology which promised freedom for men at the expense of circumscribing women's access to knowledge and learning. It is nevertheless noticeable, that whilst the ideological message of humanism and Protestantism places women within the constraining model of chaste and silent wife, women themselves begin to articulate an analysis of this constraint. Makin argues that it is the lack of education which disinherits women from the public sphere and which keeps them foolish. When Mary Astell published her *A serious proposal to the ladies* in 1697, a text included in Vivien Jones's *Women in the Eighteenth Century* (1990), her plea was for a fair and comprehensive educational system to better the status of women: such a plea looks both to the future of feminist struggle and to the previous century and a half's debate on education.

Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christian woman*

Text from: the 1540 edition, transl. Richard Hyde, fos 5^v–12^v.

Of the learning of maids

Of maids some be but little meet for learning, likewise as some men be unapt; again some be born unto it, or at least not unfit for it. Therefore they that be dull are not to be discouraged, and those that be apt should be hearted and encouraged. I perceive that learned women be suspected of many, as who saith the subtilty of learning should be a nourishment for the maliciousness of their nature. Verily I do not allow in a subtle and a crafty woman such learning as should teach her deceit and teach her no good manners and virtues. Notwithstanding the precepts of living and the examples of those that have lived well, and had knowledge together of holiness, be the keepers of chastity and pureness, and the copies of virtues, and pricks to prick and to move folks to continue in them. . . . But you shall not lightly find an ill woman; except it be such one, as either knoweth not, or at leastway considereth not what chastity and honesty is worth, nor seeth what mischief she doeth when she forgoeth it, nor regardeth how great a treasure, for how foul, for how light, and transitory an image of pleasure she changeth, what a sort of ungraciousness she letteth in, what time she shutteth forth chastity, nor pondereth what bodily pleasure is, how vain and foolish a thing, which is not worth the turning of a hand, not only unworthy, wherefore she should

cast away that which is most goodly treasure that a woman can have. And she that hath learned in books to cast this and such other things, and hath furnished and fenced her mind with holy counsels, shall never find to do any villainy. For if she can find in her heart to do naughtily, having so many precepts of virtue to keep her, what should we suppose she should do, having no knowledge of goodness at all? . . .

For the study of learning is such a thing, that it occupieth one's mind wholly, and lifeth it up into the knowledge of most goodly matters, and plucketh it from the remembrance of such things as be foul. And if any such thought come into their mind, either the mind, well fortified with the precepts of good living, avoideth them away, or else it giveth none heed unto those things that be vile and foul, when it hath other most goodly and pure pleasure, wherewith it is delighted. And therefore I suppose that Pallas the goddess of wisdom and cunning, and all the Muses, were feigned in old times to be virgins. And the mind, set upon learning and wisdom, shall not only abhor from foul lust, that is to say the most white thing from soot, and the most pure from spots. But also they shall leave all such light and trifling pleasures, wherein the light fantasies of maids have delight, as songs, dances and such other wanton and peevish plays. A woman, saith Plutarch, given unto learning, will never delight in dancing. But here peradventure a man would ask, what learning a woman should be set unto, and what she shall study? I have told you: the study of wisdom, the which doth instruct their manners and inform their living, and teacheth them the way of good and holy life. As for eloquence, I have no great care, nor a woman needeth it not, but she needeth goodness and wisdom. Nor is it no shame for a woman to hold her peace, but it is a shame for her and abominable to lack discretion and to live ill. Nor I will not here condemn eloquence, which both Quintilian and St Jerome following him, say, was praised in Cornelia the mother of Gracchus, and in Hortensia the daughter of Hortensius. If there may be found any holy and well learned woman, I had lever have her to teach them. If there be none, let us choose some man either well aged, or else good and virtuous, which hath a wife, and that right fair enough, whom he loveth well, and so shall he not desire other. For these things ought to be seen to, forasmuch as chastity in bringing up a woman requireth the most diligence, and in a manner all together. When she shall be taught to read, let those books be taken in hand that may teach good manners. And when she shall learn to write, let not her example be void verses, nor wanton or trifling songs, but some sad sentence, prudent and chaste, taken out of holy scripture, or the sayings of philosophers, which by often writing she may fasten better in her memory. And in learning, as I point none end to the man, no more I do to the woman: saving that it is meet that the man have knowledge of many and divers things,

that may both profit himself and the commonwealth, both with the use and increasing of learning. But I would the woman should be altogether in that part of philosophy, that taketh upon it to inform and teach and amend the conditions. And finally let her learn for herself alone and her young children, or her sisters in our Lord. For it neither becometh a woman to rule a school, nor to live among men, or speak abroad, and shake off her demureness and honesty, either all together or a great part: which if she be good it were better to be at home within and unknown to other folks. And in company to hold her tongue demurely. And let few see her and none at all hear her . . .

What books ought to be read, and what not

St Jerome writing unto Leta of the teaching of Paul commandeth thus: *let her learn to hear nothing, nor speak, but it that pertaineth unto the fear of God.* Nor there is no doubt but he will counsel the same of reading. There is an use nowadays, worse than among the pagans that books written in our mother's tongue that be made but for idle men and women to read, have none other matter but of war and love: of the which books I think it shall not need to give any precepts. If I speak unto Christian folks, what need I to tell what mischief is toward, when straw and dry wood is cast into the fire? Yea, but these be written they say for idle folk, as though idleness were not a vice great enough of itself, without firebrands be put unto it, wherewith the fire may catch a man altogether, and more hot. What should a maid do with armour? Which once to name were a shame for her. I have heard tell that in some places gentlewomen behold marvellous busily the plays and joustings of armed men, and give sentence and judgement of them and that the men fear and set more by their judgements than the men's . . . Plato casteth out of the commonwealth of wise men, which he made, Homer and Hesiodus, the poets: and yet have they none ill thing in comparison unto Ovid's books of love which we read, and carry them in our hands, and learn them by heart, yea and some school masters teach them to their scholars and some make expositions and expound the vices. Augustus banished Ovid himself and think you then that he would have kept these expositors in the country? Except a man would reckon it a worse deed to write vice than to expound it, and inform the tender minds of the young folks therewith. We banish him that maketh false weights and measures, and that counterfeiteth coin or an instrument: and what a work is made in these things for small matters. But he is had in honour, and counted a master of wisdom, that corrupteth the young people. Therefore a woman should beware of all these books, likewise as of serpents or snakes. And if there be any woman that hath such delight in these books, that she will not leave them out of her hands: she should not

only be kept from them, but also if she read good books with an ill will and loath thereto, her father and friends should provide that she be kept from all reading, and so by disuse forget learning, if it can be done. For it is better to lack a good thing, than to use it ill. Nor a good woman will take no such books in hand, nor file⁷ her mouth with them: and as much as she can, she will go about to make other as like herself as she may, both by doing well and teaching well, and also as far as she may rule by commanding and charging. Now what books ought to be read, some everybody knoweth, as the gospels, the acts, the epistles of the apostles, and the old testament, St Jerome, St Cyprian, Augustine, Ambrose, Hilary, Gregory, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and such other. But as touching some, wise and sad men must be asked counsel of in them. Nor the woman ought not to follow her own judgement, lest when she hath but a light entering in learning, she should take false for true: hurtful instead of wholesome, foolish and peevish for sad and wise. She shall find in such books as are worthy to be read, all things more witty, and full of greater pleasure, and more sure to trust unto: which shall both profit the life, and marvellously delight the mind. Therefore on holy days continually, and some time on working days, let her read or hear such as shall lift up the mind to God, and set it in a Christian quietness, and make the living better. Also it should be best afore she go to mass to read at home the gospel and the epistle of the day, and with it some exposition, if she have any. Now when thou comest from mass, and hast overlooked thy house, as much as pertaineth unto thy charge read with a quiet mind some of these that I have spoken of, if thou canst read, if not, hear. And on some working days do likewise, if thou be not letted with some necessary business in thy house and thou have books at hand: and specially if there be any longer space between the holy days, for think not that the holy days be ordained of the church to play on and sit idle and talk with thy gossips: but unto the intent that then thou maist more intently and with a more quiet mind, think of God and this life of ours, and the life in heaven that is to come.

Desiderius Erasmus, Colloquy of the abbot and learned woman

Antrömius, the abbot, and Magdalia, the nun, discuss women's education. Text from: *The Colloquies*, transl. H.M., 1671, pp. 241–5.

Ma. Hast thou, who art so old, and moreover, an abbot and a courtier, never seen books in noble women's houses?

An. I have seen some, but written in French, I see here Greek and Latin.

Ma. Do books only that are written in French, teach *men* wisdom?

An. But this becomes noble women, to have somewhat wherewith they may pleasantly pass away their spare time.

Ma. Is't lawful for noble women only to be wise and live comfortably?
An. Thou does not well to put these two together, viz. to be wise, and to live comfortably. It is not for women to be wise, but it belongs to noble women to live comfortably.

* * *

An. I think thou art some sophistress, thou pratest so wittily.
Ma. I will not tell thee what I think thou art. But why doth this furniture displease thee?

An. Because a spindle and a distaff are a woman's instruments.

Ma. Is't not the duty of a matron to look to her household business, and to instruct her children?

An. It is so.

Ma. Dost thou think so great an affair can be ordered without wisdom?

An. I do not think so.

Ma. Why but my books teach me this wisdom.

An. I have three score and two monks at home, and yet thou wilt find never a book in my bed chamber.

Ma. Therefore these monks are well provided for.

An. I can endure books, but I cannot endure Latin books.

Ma. Wherefore?

An. Because that language is not fit for women.

Ma. I would know the reason.

An. Because it little avails to maintain their chastity.

Ma. Books then it seems that are written in French, full of foolish fables, make for one's chastity?

An. There is another thing in it.

Ma. Speak it plainly, whatever it is.

An. They are safer from priests, if they be not skilled in the Latin tongue.

Ma. Nay, there is the least danger in that respect by your means, seeing that you are very careful of this that *you* be not skilled in the Latin tongue.

An. The common people think thus, because it is a rare and unusual thing for a woman to be skilled in Latin.

Ma. Why dost thou tell me of the common people, which is the worst counsellor to do a thing well? Why dost thou allege custom, which is the tutoress of all bad things? We must accustom ourselves to the best things, and so that will become familiar which was unusual to us, and pleasant, which was unpleasant, and comely which seemed uncomely.

An. I agree to thee.

Ma. Is it not a seemingly thing for a woman born in Germany to learn French?

An. Yes.

Ma. For what reason?

An. That she may talk with those who are skilled in French.

Ma. And dost thou think it an unseemly thing for me to learn Latin, that I may confer every day with so many authors, being so learned, so wise and so faithful advisers?

An. Books do much weaken women's brains, though otherwise they have little enough.

Ma. How much you have I know not: certainly, how little soever I have, I had rather spend it in honest studies than in prayers said without understanding, in feastings all night long and in drinking off large boles.⁸

Richard Hyrde, *Preface*

Hyrde was one of the younger generation of humanists in the More household: here he prefaces More's daughter's translation, which she herself did not comment on publicly. Text from: *Preface* to Margaret Roper's translation of Erasmus, *A devout treatise upon the paternoster*, 1526, fos A2^v-B3^v.

I have heard many men put great doubt whether it should be expedient and requisite or not a woman to have learning in books of Latin and Greek; and some utterly affirm that it is not only neither necessary nor profitable, but also very noisome and jeopardous: alleging for their opinion that the frail kind of women being inclined of their own courage unto vice, and mutable at every novelty, if they should have skill in many things that be written in the Greek and Latin tongue, compiled and made with great craft and eloquence, where the matter is haply sometime more sweet unto the ear than wholesome for the mind, it would of likelihood both inflame their stomachs a great deal the more to that vice that men say they be too much given unto of their own nature already, and instruct them also with more subtilty and conveyance to set forward and accomplish their froward intent and purpose. But these men that so say do in my judgement either regard but little what they speak in this matter, or else, as they be for the more part unlearned, they envy it, and take it sore to heart, that other should have that precious jewel which they neither have themselves nor can find in their hearts to take the pain to get . . .

Now as for learning, if it were cause of any evil as they say it is, it worry worse in the man than in the woman, because (as I have said here before) he can both worse stay and restrain himself than she. And moreover than that he cometh offer⁹ and in more occasions than the woman, inasmuch as he liveth more abroad among company daily where he shall be moved to utter such craft as he hath gotten by his learning. And women abide most at home, occupied ever with some good or necessary business. And the Latin and the Greek tongue, I see not but there is as little hurt in them as in books of

English and French, which men doth read themselves for the proper pastimes that be written in them, and for the witty and crafty conveyance of the makings: and also can bear well enough that women read them if they will, never so much which commodities be far better handled in the Latin and Greek, than any other language. And in them be many holy doctors' writings, so devote and effectuous,¹⁰ that whosoever readeth them, must needs be either much better, or less evil, which every good body, both man and woman, will read and follow, rather than other . . . And where they find fault with learning, because they say it engendereth wit and craft there they reprehend it for that it is most worthily to be commended for, and the which is one singular cause wherefore learning ought to be desired. For he that had lever have his wife a fool than a wise woman, I hold him worse than twice frantic. Also reading and studying of books so occupieth the mind, that it can have no leisure to muse or delight in other fantasies, when in all handy works that men say be more meet for a woman, the body may be busy in one place and the mind walking in another: and while they sit sewing and spinning with their fingers, may taste and compass many peevish fantasies in their minds, which must needs be occupied either with good or bad, so long as they be waking. And those that be evil disposed will find the means to be naughty though they can never a letter on the book; and she that will be good, learning shall cause her to be much the better. For it sheweth the image and ways of the good living, even right as a mirror sheweth the similitude and proportion of the body. And doubtless the daily experience proveth that such as are naughty are those that never knew what learning meant. For I never heard tell nor read of any woman well learned that ever was (as plenteous as evil tongues be) spotted or infamed as vicious. But on the other side many by their learning taken such increase of goodness, that many may bear them witness of their virtues, of which sort I could rehearse a great number, both of old time and late, saving that I will be content as for now with one example of our own country and time that is. This gentlewoman which translated this little book hereafter following, whose virtuous conversation, living and sad demeanour may be proof evident enough what good learning doth where it is surely rooted; of whom other women may take example of prudent, humble and wifely behaviour, charitable and very Christian virtue, with which she hath with God's help endeavoured herself no less to garnish her soul, than it hath liked his goodness with lovely beauty and comeliness to garnish and set out her body. And undoubted is it that to the increase of her virtue she hath taken and taketh no little occasion of her learning besides her other manifold and great commodities taken of the same, among which commodities this is not the least that with her virtuous, worshipful, wise and well-learned husband, she hath by the occasion of her learning and his delight therein such especial comfort, pleasure and pastime, as were not well possible

for one unlearned couple, either to take together, or to conceive in their minds what pleasure is therein.

Thomas Becon, *Catechism*

Text from: *Works*, 1564, fos 536^v-7.

Of the office and duty of old and ancient women

Father. The holy apostle, after that he hath dissuaded the old women from vanity of apparel, from much babbling, and from drunkenness, declareth what good they ought to do, lest they, being trees without fruit, be hewn down and cast into the fire [Matt. 3]. And this good work that he requireth of them is that they teach honest things.

Son. But St Paul in another place saith: *I suffer not a woman to teach, neither to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*

Father. The same St Paul also in another place, expounding what is meant by these words, saith, *let your women keep silence in the congregations. For it is not permitted unto them to speak, but to be under obedience, as saith the law. If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is a shame for women to speak in the congregation.* Of these words of St Paul we learn that it is not lawful for women to teach in the congregation openly, which only appertain to men, yea and unto such men alone as are appointed by public authority unto the ministry. Notwithstanding women to preach and teach in their own houses, it is not only not forbidden, but also most straightly commanded. For who knoweth not that every man and every woman is a bishop in their own house, and ought to teach their family, and to bring them up in the doctrine and nurture of the lord our God? It is therefore also lawful for old and ancient matrons to teach.

Son. Whom should they teach?

Father. Young women.

Son. What should they teach them?

Father. To be sober-minded; to love their husbands; to love their children; to be discreet, chaste, housewifely, good, obedient to their husbands; that the word of God be not evilly spoken.

Son. I looked that thou should have said unto me that the ancient matrons would teach the young women trimly to dance, minionly to play upon the lute or virginals, cunningly to work with the needle, finely to apparel themselves, handsomely to play the

serving maids, pleasantly to entertain strangers, yokners and young gentlemen!

Father. These be things of vanity, rather provoking unto lewdness than unto virtue, heretofore abhorred and hated of all modest and sober women. The works and qualities which St Paul here setteth forth, that the ancient matrons should teach the young women, are necessary works and godly qualities. Can anything be more necessary or godly in a Christian commonweal, than to bring up maids and young women virtuously, and to teach them to be sober-minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, housewifely, good, obedient to their husbands? If all our maids and young women were thus brought up, we should not have so many idle, dishonest, and lewd women as we have at this present day.

To bring this thing to pass, it is expedient that by public authority, schools for women children be erected and set up in every Christian commonweal, and honest, sage, wise, discreet, sober, grave, and learned matrons made rulers and mistresses of the same, and that honest and liberal stipends be appointed for the said school-mistresses, which shall travail in the bringing up of young maids, that by this means they may be occasioned the more gladly and willingly to take pains. And to this end, without doubt at the beginning were the monasteries of solitary women, whom we heretofore called nuns, built and set up, and endowed with possessions of our godly ancestors, although in process of time they were greatly abused, so that they were made of Christian and free schools, prisons of Antichrist . . .

Son. It is a matter most worthy to be considered. For if it be thought convenient, as it is most convenient that schools should be erected and set up for the right education and bringing up of the youth of the male kind, why should it not also be thought convenient that schools be built for the godly institution and virtuous bringing up of the youth of the female kind? Is not the woman the creature of God, so well as the man? Is not she as dear unto God as the man? Is not the woman a necessary member of the commonweal? Have not we all our beginning of her? Are not we born, nursed, and brought up of a woman? Do not the children for the most part prove even such as the mothers are, of whom they come? Can the mothers bring up their children virtuously when they themselves be void of all virtue? Can the nurses instil any goodness into the tender breasts of their nurse-children, when they themselves have learned none? Can that woman govern her house godly which

knoweth not one point of godliness? Who seeth not now then how necessary the virtuous education and bringing up of the woman-kind is? Which thing cannot be conveniently brought to pass, except schools for that purpose be appointed.

Thomas Salter, *The mirror of modesty*

Salter's publication advises mothers on the education of daughters. Text from: the first edition, 1578, fos B5v-B8r.

Besides, when any maiden is driven into a trembling fear by her mistress sudden sharp frowning, as no doubt some, being of mild and gentle natures, will be soon, our good matron will soon change her sour lowering into a sweet smiling, and, with gentle and virtuous informations and cheerful promises, put her out of her fear, for in no wise would I wish any to be over-pressed by fear, because thereby many become even simple like fools. And whereas some parents be of opinion that it be necessary for maidens, to be skilful in philosophy moral and natural, thinking it an honour unto them to be thought well learned, I for my part am the contrary because that by the same they are made to understand the evils imminent to human life, yea thereby is opened up to them the inclinations and proneness, which naturally even from our cradles we have, unto vice, which knowledge is not requisite to be in young women. Likewise the examples of evil and wicked men, the corrupt lives and lewd customs of those that have conversation with us, the heaps of pleasures, pastimes, delights, and recreations, and the deceits and guiles of our ghostly enemy, from the which we see how the wary wise man can hardly defend himself (I leave the young and tender virgin) with the protection and armour of great learning: to which or against which I should flatly answer, that the evil use of learning hath more oftentimes be cause of discommodity and damage, than the right and laudable use of it hath been of profit and benefit. I should peradventure be suspected of some for such a one as did the same to the derogation, slander and reproof of learning, which thing I utterly deny . . . Sparta might be brought in, for that a long time, whilst it had eloquence in horror and hate, thinking the use of it more meet for effeminate and wanton idle men than for courageous and warlike champions, it flourished as chief of Greece with great glory. But because I have taken in hand to instruct a Christian maiden, laying aside all other examples, I might bring in the example of our Saviour, that rock of infallible verity, who utterly blamed the wisdom of the world, as enemy to good life and religion. But my intent is not, neither was it ever, to attribute such evil as springeth from the malice of wicked men and their corrupt nature to the sacred study of learning, to which I

have given my mind so much as in me lay all my lifetime. But my purpose is to prove that in a virtuous virgin and modest maiden, such use is more dangerous and hurtful, than necessary or praiseworthy. Some perhaps will allege that a maiden being well learned, and able to search and read sundry authors, may become chaste and godly by reading the godly and chaste lives of diverse. But I answer, who can deny that seeing of herself she is able to read and understand the Christian poets . . . and such like, that she will not also read the lascivious books of Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and in Virgil, of Acneas and Dido and among the Greek poets of the filthy love (if I may term it love) of the Gods themselves, and of their wicked adulteries and abominable fornications, as in Homer and suchlike? . . . And sure I suppose there is no man of reason and understanding but had rather love a maiden unlearned and chaste than one suspected of dishonest life, though never so famous and well learned in philosophy. Wherefore I wish all parents to beware and take heed, how they suffer their young daughters, being frail of nature, to be bold disputers. . . . And who is it that will deny that it is not more praise and honour to do noble deeds, than to write of them? Sure, I think none. I am therefore of this advice, that it is not meet nor convenient for a maiden to be taught or trained up in learning of humane arts, in whom a virtuous demeanour and honest behaviour would be a more sightlier ornament than the light or vainglory of learning, for in learning and studying of the arts there are two things finally proposed unto us, that is recreation and profit. Touching profit, that is not to be looked for, at the hands of her that is given us for a companion in our labours, but rather every woman ought wholly to be active and diligent about the government of her household and family; and touching recreation by learning, that cannot be granted her without great danger and offence to the beauty and brightness of her mind. Seeing then that the government of estates and public weals are not committed into the hands of women; neither that it is lawful or convenient for them to write laws by which men should be ruled and governed . . . neither as professors of science and faculty, to teach in schools the wisdom of laws and philosophy; and seeing also that in such studies as yieldeth recreation and pleasure, there is no less danger that they will as well learn to be subtle and shameless lovers, as cunning and skilful writers of ditties, sonnets, epigrams and ballads; let them be restrained to the care and government of a family.

Richard Mulcaster, *Positions*

Mulcaster, a notable Protestant humanist, was the headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School, where he taught Spenser. This work is dedicated to Elizabeth I, despite the fact that only one chapter of forty-five is devoted to girls' education. Text from: the first edition, 1581, pp. 166-83.

And to prove they [girls] are to be trained, I find four special reasons, whereof any one, much more all, may persuade any their most adversary, much more me, which am for them tooth and nail. The first is the manner and custom of my country, which allowing them to learn will be loath to be contraried by any of her countrymen. The second is the duty which we owe unto them, whereby we are charged in conscience not to leave them lame in that which is for them. The third is their own towardness, which God by nature would never have given them to remain idle or to small purpose. The fourth is the excellent effects in that sex when they have had the help of good bringing up: which commendeth the cause of such excellency, and wisheth us to cherish that tree whose fruit is both so pleasant in taste and so profitable in trial.

* * *

But now having granted them the benefit and society of our education, we must assign the end, wherefore the train shall serve, whereby we may apply it the better. Our own¹¹ train¹² is without restraint for either matter or manner, by cause our employment is so general in all things: theirs is within limit, and so must their train be. If a young maiden be to be trained in respect of marriage, obedience to her head and the qualities which look that way must needs be her best way. If in regard of necessity to learn how to live, artificial train must furnish out her trade. If in respect of ornament to beautify her birth and to honour her place, rarities in that kind and seemly for that kind do best bescem such. If for government, not denied them by God and devised them by men, the greatness of their calling doth call for great gifts, and general excellencies for general occurrences. Wherefore having these different ends always in the eye, we may point them their train in different degrees.

* * *

Though the girls seem commonly to have a quicker ripening in wit than boys have, for all that seeming, yet it is not so. Their natural weakness which cannot hold long, delivers very soon, and yet there be as prating boys as there be prating wenches. Besides their brains be not so much charged, neither with weight nor with multitude of matters, as boys' heads be: and therefore like empty cask they make the greater noise. As those men which seem to be very quick witted by some sudden pretty answer, or some sharp reply, be not always most burdened, neither with letters nor learning. . . . As for bodies the maidens be more weak, most commonly even by nature, as of a moonish influence, and all our whole kind is weak of the mother side, which when she was first made even then weakened the man's side. Therefore great regard must be had to them, no less, nay rather more, than to boys in that time. For

in process of time, if they be of worth themselves, they may so match as the parent may take more pleasure in his sons by law, than in his heirs by nature. They are to be the principal pillars in the upholding of households, and so they are likely to prove, if they prove well in training. The dearest comfort that man can have if they incline to good: the nearest corrosive if they tread awry. And therefore charily to be cared for, bearing a jewel of such worth in a vessel of such weakness.

* * *

For the matter, what shall they learn? Thus I think, following the custom of my country, which in that that is usual doth lead me on boldly and in that also which is most rare, doth show my path to be already trodden. So that I shall not need to err, if I mark but my guide well. Where rare excellencies in some women do but show us some one or two parents' good success in their daughters' learning, there is neither precedent to be fetched nor precept to be framed. For precepts be to conduct the common, but these singularities be above the common: precedents be for hope, those pictures pass beyond all hope. And yet they serve for proof to proceed by in way of argument, that women can learn if they will and may learn what they list, when they bend their wits to it. To learn to read is very common, where convenientness doth serve, and writing is not refused, where opportunity will yield it.

Reading, if for nothing else it were, as for many things else it is, is very needful for religion, to read that which they must know, and ought to perform, if they have not whom to hear in that matter which they read: or if their memory be not steadfast, by reading to revive it. If they hear first and after read of the selfsame argument, reading confirms their memory. Here I may not omit many and great contentments, many and sound comforts, many and manifold delights, which those women that have skill and time to read, without hindering their housewifery, do continually receive by reading of some comfortable and wise discourses penned either in form of history or for direction to live by.

As for writing, though it be discommended for some private carriages (wherein we men also, no less than women bear oftentimes blame, if that were a sufficient exception why we should not learn to write), it hath his commodity where it filleth in match, and helps to enrich the good man's mercy.¹³ Many good occasions are oftentimes offered, where it were better for them to have the use of their pen for the good that comes by it, than to wish they had it when the default is felt: and for fear of evil, which cannot be avoided in some, to avert that good which may be commodious to many.

Music is much used, where it is to be had, to the parent's delight, while the daughter be young. . . . I meddle not with needles nor yet with housewifery, though I think it and know it, to be a principal commendation in a

woman: to be able to govern and direct her household, to look to her house and family, to provide and keep necessities, though the Goodman pay, to know the force of her kitchen, for sickness and health in herself and her charge: because I deal only with such things as be incident to their learning.

* * *

Where the question is how much a woman ought to learn, the answer may be, so much as shall be needful. If that also come in doubt the return may be either so much as her parents conceive of her in hope, if her parentage be mean; or provide for her in state, if her birth bear a sail.¹⁴ For if the parents be of calling and in great account, and the daughters capable of some singular qualities, many commendable effects may be wrought thereby, and the young maidens being well trained are very soon commended to right honourable matches, whom they may well beseech and answer much better, their qualities in state having good correspondence with their matches of state, and their wisdoms also putting to helping hand, for the procuring of their common good. . . . This *how much* consisteth either in perfecting of those forenamed four, reading well, writing fair, singing sweet, playing fine, beyond all cry and above all comparison, that pure excellency in things but ordinary may cause extraordinary liking: or else in skill of languages annexed to these four, that more good gifts may work more wonder. . . . These women, which we see in our days to have been brought up in learning, do rule this conclusion. That such personages as be born to be princes, or matches to great peers, or to furnish out such trains, for some peculiar ornaments to their place and calling, are to receive this kind of education in the highest degree, that is convenient for their kind. But princely maidens above all, because occasion of their height¹⁵ stands in need of such gifts, both to honour themselves and to discharge the duty which the countries, committed to their hands, do daily call for: and besides what match is more honourable than when desert for rare qualities doth join itself with highness in degree?

* * *

Now there is nothing left to end this treatise of young maidens but where and under whom they are to learn, which question will be sufficiently resolved, upon consideration of the time how long they are to learn, which time is commonly till they be about thirteen or fourteen years old, wherein as the matter which they must deal withal cannot be very much in so little time, so the perfecting thereof requireth much travail, though their time be so little, and there would be some show afterward wherein their training did avail them. They that may continue some long time at learning, through the state and ability of their parents, have also their time and place suitable appointed by the foresight of their parents.

Bartholomew Batty, *The Christian man's closet*

The aim of this treatise is 'the godly training up of children, as also of those duties that children owe unto their parents'. The speakers are Anusius, Theodidactus, Theophilus and Mattina, the mother, who does not speak on girls' education. Text from: the first edition, 1581, transl. William Lowth, pp. 75ff.

Theophilus.

Although hitherto there hath almost nothing been spoken of you which may not be referred to the feminine sex, yet shall it not seem unprofitable if you add hereunto some matter or doctrine which may seem to appertain to maidens only, to the end also they might be the more stirred up, and put in remembrance of their duties, especially when they are admonished expressly.

Theodidactus.

I will very willingly take that pains, for these courteous and honest damsels' sakes, and so much the rather for that I will draw nothing here out of mine own quiver or storehouse, but out of the Epistle of St Jerome unto Leta will I faithfully recite the things which specially appertain to this posture ...

- 1 After this manner is the soul to be taught and instructed, which shall be the temple of God. Let her learn to hear none other thing, neither to speak anything, saith St Jerome, but that which may appertain to the fear of God.
- 2 Let her not hear or understand any filthy words, nor merry ballads, nor jests, nor rhymes, but let her young and tender tongue be seasoned with sweet songs and psalms.
- 3 Weigh not down her neck with gold and precious stones, nor beset her head with pearls, neither curl, nor bush out her hair, nor die it into any unnatural colour.
- 4 Let her not eat openly (that is to say) in the feasts and banquets of her parents, lest she see such meats as she might desire and lust after: let her not learn to drink wine, wherein is all excess and riot.
- 5 Let her not delight and take pleasure in the hearing of musical instruments, shawms,¹⁶ zithers, lutes and harps, nor know wherefore they were invented.
- 6 Let her appoint herself some task every day, to read some special part of the holy scriptures chosen for the same purpose.
- 7 Let her learn to card and spin to make woollen cloth: and to handle the wheel and distaff to make her linen cloth.
- 8 Let her not set her mind on silks, as taffeta, damask, satin and velvet.
- 9 Let her provide and get such clothes wherewith cold may be defended, not wherewith her body shall be nakedly apparelled.

- 10 Let her so eat as that she may be always ahungered, that immediately after her meat she may either read or sing psalms.
 - 11 If it chance thee at any time either to walk or ride out of the town or city, leave not thy daughter at home without a goodly governor: for without thee she knoweth not, neither is she able to live, and when she shall chance to be alone, let her be afraid.
 - 12 Let her not have her secret meetings, and fellowship with foolish and light maidens.
 - 13 In the stead of silk, pearls and precious jewels, let her love godly books, not gaudily garnished and set out with gold, but inwardly perfected, and learnedly distinguished, for the better increase of her faith.
 - 14 Let her first learn the psalter or psalms of David in metre, which may withdraw her mind from light and vain tongues and bawdy ballads.
- And in the proverbs of Solomon, which may instruct her to good and godly life: and in *Ecclesiastes*, let her exercise herself to seek out things which appertain to the world. In Job, let her follow the example of virtue and patience. *A wise daughter is to her husband in the stead of an inheritance*. Also a shamefast maid will reverence her husband.

Elizabeth Jocelyn, *The mother's legacy to her unborn child*

Jocelyn, writing for her unborn child, assumes that she will bear a son. The extracts below are those relevant specifically to a daughter. Text from: the first edition, 1624, pp. 17–19, 30–45.

To my truly loving and most dearly loved husband, Towrell Jocelyn

Mine own dear love, I no sooner conceived an hope that I should be made a mother by thee, but with it entered the consideration of a mother's duty, and shortly after followed the apprehension of danger that might prevent me from executing that care I so exceedingly desired, I mean in religious training our child. And in truth, death appearing in this shape was doubly terrible unto me. First in respect of the painfulness of that kind of death, and next of the loss my little one should have in wanting me.

But I thank God these fears were cured with the remembrance that all things work together for the best to those that love God, and a certain assurance that he will give me patience according to my pain.

Yet still I thought there was some good office I might do for my child, more than only to bring it forth (though it should please God to take me). When I considered our frailty, our part inclination to sin, the Devil's subtlety, and the world's deceitfulness, against these how much desired I to admonish

it! But still it came into my mind that death might deprive me of time if I should neglect the present. I knew not what to do: I thought of writing, but then mine own weakness appeared so manifestly, that I was ashamed, and durst not undertake it. But when I could find no other means to express my motherly zeal, I encouraged myself with these reasons.

First that I wrote to a child, and though I were but a woman, yet to a child's judgement what I understood might serve for a foundation to a better learning.

Again I considered it was to my own, and in private sort, and my love to my own might excuse my errors.

And lastly, but chiefly, I comforted myself that my intent was good, and that I was well assured God is the prosperer of good purposes.

Thus resolved, I writ this ensuing letter to our little one, to whom I could not find a fitter hand to convey it than thine own, which maist with authority see the performance of this my little legacy, of which my child is executor.

The mother's legacy to her unborn child

Thou art no sooner broke out of the arms of sloth, but pride steps in diligently, waiting to furnish thee with any vain toy in thy attire . . .

I desire thee for God's sake shun this vanity, whether thou be son or daughter. If a daughter, I confess thy task is harder because thou art weaker, and thy temptations to this vice greater, for thou shalt see those whom perhaps thou wilt think less able, exalted far above thee in this kind; and it may be thou wilt desire to be like them, if not to out-go them. But believe and remember that I tell thee, the end of all these vanities is bitter as gall.

Oh, the remembrance of mis-spent time, when thou shalt grow in years, and have attained no other knowledge, than to dress thyself. When thou shalt see half, perhaps all, thy time spent; and that of all thou hast sowed thou hast nothing to reap but repentance, late repentance, how wilt thou grieve? How wilt thou accuse one folly for bringing in another? And in thy memory cast over the cause of each misfortune which hath befallen them, till, passing from one to another, at last thou findest thy corrupt will to be the first cause, and then thou wilt with grief enough perceive that if thou hadst served God when thou servedst thy fond desires, thou hadst now had peace of heart. The God of mercy give thee grace to remember him in the days of thy youth.

Mistake me not, nor give yourself leave to take too much liberty with saying my mother was too strict. No, I am not, for I give you leave to follow modest fashions, but not to be a beginner of fashions: nor would I have you follow it till it be general; so that in not doing as others do, you might appear more singular than wise: but in one word, this is all I desire, that you will not

set your heart on such fooleries, and you shall see that this modest carriage will win you reputation and love with the wise and virtuous sort.

And once again, remember how many hours maist thou give to God which if thou spendest in these vanities, thou shalt never be able to make account of. If thou dost but endeavour to do well, God will accept the will for the deed, but if thou wilfully spend the mornings of thy time in these vanities, God will not be put off with such reckonings, but punishments will follow, such as I pray God thou maist not pull upon thee.

Yet alas, this is but one sort of pride, and so far from being accounted a vice, that, if the time mends not before you, you will hear a well dressed woman (for that is the style of honour) more commended than a wise or honest, or religious woman. And it may be this may move you to follow their idleness: but when you have any such desire, draw yourself to consider what manner of person the commended and commendars are, and you shall find them all of one batch, such as being vain themselves, applaud it in others.

But if you will desire praise, follow the example of those religious women whose virtuous fames time hath not power to raze out: as devout Anna, who served the Lord with fasting and prayer, *Luke 2*; just Elizabeth, who served God without reproof; religious Esther, who taught her maids to fast and pray, *Est. 4:15*; and the chaste Susanna, whose story, I hope, the strictest will allow for a worthy example.

I am so fearful that thou shouldst fall into this sin, that I could spend my little time of life in exhorting thee from it. I know it is the most dangerous subtle sin that can steal the heart of man, it will alter shapes as oft as the chameleon doth colours, it will fit itself to all dispositions, and (which is most strange) it will so disguise itself, that he must be cunning who discerns it from humility, nay it may lie in thine own heart, and if thou beest not a diligent searcher of thy self, thou shalt not know it . . .

Solomon saith, *pride goeth before destruction, Prov. 16:18. And a high mind before the fall.* And our blessed Saviour, the true pattern of humility, exhorts us to learn of him that was lowly and meek in heart, *Matt. 11:9*. And if we do so he promises we shall find rest unto our souls. Neither want there curses, threatening where persuasions will not serve. *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be humbled, Luke 14:11.* Read the holy scriptures often and diligently, and thou shalt find continual threatenings against pride, punishment of pride, and warnings from pride. Thou shalt find no sin so heavily punished as this: it made devils of angels, a beast of great Nebuchadnezzar, dog's meat of Jezebel, and I will conclude with a good man's saying: *if all sins reigning in the world were burnt to ashes, even the ashes of pride would be able to reduce them all again.*

I know in fewer words there might much more have been said against this sin, but I know not who will say so much to thee when I am gone. Therefore

I desire thou maist be taught these my instructions when thou art young, that this foul sin may be weeded out before it take deep root in thy heart.

Bathshua Makin, *An essay to revive the ancient education of gentlewomen*

Makin was the governess of Charles I's daughter, a correspondent of Maria van Shurman (the renowned German educationalist), and the proprietor of several schools during her career. Here she both advertises for such a school, and argues strongly for a broader and more intellectual curriculum for girls, in the voice of two male interlocutors. Text from: the first edition, 1673, pp. 3–4, 22–8, 42–3.

*To all ingenious and virtuous ladies, most especially to her
Highness Mary, eldest daughter to his royal highness the
Duke of York*

Custom when it is inveterate, hath a mighty influence: it hath the force of nature itself. The barbarous custom to breed women low, is grown general amongst us, and hath prevailed so far, that it is verily believed (especially among a sort of debauched sots) that women are not endued with such reason, as men; nor capable of improvement by education, as they are. It is looked upon as a monstrous thing, to pretend the contrary. A learned woman is thought to be a comet, that bodes mischief, whenever it appears. To offer to the world the liberal education of women is to deface the image of God in man, it will make woman so high, and men so low, like fire in the house-top, it will set the whole world in a flame!

These things and worse than these, are commonly talked of, and verily believed by many, who think themselves wise men: to contradict these is a bold attempt; where the attempter must expect to meet with much opposition. Therefore, ladies, I beg the candid opinion of your sex, whose interest I assert. More especially I implore the favour of your Royal Highness a person most eminent amongst them, whose patronage alone will be a sufficient protection. What I have written is not out of humour to show how much may be said of trivial thing to little purpose. I verily think women were formerly educated in the knowledge of arts and tongues, and by their education many did rise to a great height in learning. Were women thus educated now, I am confident the advantage would be very great: the women would have the honour and pleasure, their relations profit, and the whole nation advantage. I am very sensible it is an ill time to set foot on this design: wherein not only learning but virtue itself is scorned and neglected, as pedantic things, fit only for the vulgar. I know no better way to reform these exorbitancies, than to persuade women to scorn these toys and trifles, they now spend their time about, and to attempt higher things, here offered: this

will either reclaim the men; or make them ashamed to claim the sovereignty over such as are more wise and virtuous than themselves.

Were a competent number of schools erected to educate ladies ingeniously, methinks I see how ashamed men would be of their ignorance, and how industrious the next generation would be to wipe off their reproach.

I expect to meet with many scoffs and taunts from inconsiderate and illiterate men, that prize their own lusts and pleasure more than your profit and content. I shall be the less concerned at these, so long as I am in your favour; and this discourse may be a weapon in your hands to defend yourselves, whilst you endeavour to polish your souls, that you may glorify God, and answer the end of your creation, to be meet helps to your husbands, let not your Ladyships be offended, that I do not (as some have wittily done) plead for female preeminence. To ask too much is the way to be denied all. God hath made man the head; if you be educated and instructed, as I propose, I am sure you will acknowledge it, and be satisfied that you are helps, that your husbands do consult and advise with you (which if you be wise they will be glad of) and that your husbands have the casting voice, in whose determinations you will acquiesce. That this may be the effect of this education in all ladies that shall attempt it is the desire of

Your servant.

Cave ought to be taken by us to educate women in learning

My meaning is, persons that God hath blessed with the things of this world, that have competent natural parts, ought to be educated in knowledge; that is, it is much better they should spend the time of their youth to be competently instructed in those things usually taught to gentlewomen at schools, and the overplus of their time to be spent in gaining arts, and tongues, and useful knowledge, rather than to trifle away so many precious minutes merely to polish their hands and feet, to curl their locks, to dress and trim their bodies; and in the meantime to neglect their souls, and not at all, or very little to endeavour to know God, Jesus Christ, themselves, and the things of nature, arts and tongues, subservient to these. I do not deny but women ought to be brought up to a comely and decent carriage, to their needs, to neatness, to understand all those things that do particularly belong to their sex. But when these things are competently cared for, and where there are endowments of nature and leisure, then higher things ought to be endeavoured after. Merely to teach gentlewomen to frisk and dance, to paint their faces, to curl their hair, to put on a whisk,¹⁷ to wear gay clothes, is not truly to adorn, but to adulterate their bodies; yea (what is worse) to defile their souls...

Had God intended women only as a finer sort of cattle, he would not have

made them reasonable: brutes, a few degrees higher than drills¹⁸ or monkeys (which the Indians use to do many offices) might have better fitted some men's lust, pride and pleasure; especially those that desire to keep them ignorant to be tyrannised over.

God intended woman as a help-meet to man, in his constant conversation, and in the concerns of his family and his estate, when he should most need, in sickness, weakness, absences, death, &c. Whilst we neglect to fit them for these things he hath appointed women for, we renounce God's blessing, are ungrateful to him, cruel to them, and injurious to ourselves . . .

Seeing nature produces women of such excellent parts, that they do often equalise, some times excel, men, in what ever they attempt, what reason can be given why they should not be improved?

Nothing is more excellent than man: his excellency doth not consist in his smooth skin, or erect countenance, but in his reasonable soul; and the excellency of reason is, when it is improved by art.

Learning perfects and adorns the soul, which all creatures aim at. Nay more, a principal part of God's image in man's first creation, consisted in knowledge. Sin hath clouded this: why should we not by instruction endeavour to repair that which shall be perfected in heaven?

* * *

In these late times¹⁹ there are several instances of women, when their husbands were serving their king and country, defended their houses, and did all things, as soldiers, with prudence and valour, like men.

They appeared before committees, and pleaded their own causes with good success.

This kind of education will be very useful to women.

1. The profit will be to themselves. In the general they will be able to understand, read, write, and speak their mother-tongue, which they cannot do well without this. They will have something to exercise their thoughts about, which are busy and active. Their quality ties them at home, if learning be their companion, delight and pleasure will be their attendants: for there is no greater pleasure, nor more suitable to an ingenious mind, than that which is found in knowledge; it is the first fruits of heaven, and a glimpse of that glory we afterwards expect. There is in all an innate desire of knowledge, and the satisfying this is the greatest pleasure. Men are very cruel that give them leave to look at a distance, only to know that they do not know; to make any thus to tantalise is a great torment.

This will be a great hedge against heresies: men are furnished with arts and tongues for this purpose, that they may stop the mouths of their adversaries. And women ought to be learned that they may stop their ears against seducers. It cannot be imagined so many persons of quality would be so

easily carried aside with every wind of doctrine, had they been furnished with defensive arms; I mean, had they been instructed in the plain rules of artificial reasoning, so as to distinguish a true and forcible argument, from a vain and captious fallacy; had they been furnished with examples of the most frequent illusions of erroneous seducers. Heresiarchs creep into houses, and lead silly women captive, then they lead their husbands, both their children, as the Devil did Eve, she her husband, they their posterity . . .

More particularly, persons of higher quality, for want of this education, have nothing to employ themselves in, but are forced to cards, dice, plays, and frothy romances, merely to drive away the time: whereas knowledge in arts and tongues would pleasantly employ them, and upon occasion benefit others . . .

We cannot be so stupid as to imagine that God gives ladies great estates, merely that they may eat, drink, sleep, and rise up to play. Doubtless they ought not to live thus. God, that will take an account for every idle thought, will certainly reckon with those persons that shall spend their whole lives in idle play and chat. Poor women will make but a lame excuse at the last day of their vain lives; it will be something to say, that they were educated no better. But what answer men will make, that do industriously deny them better improvement, lest they should be wiser than themselves, I cannot imagine . . .

As for unmarried persons, who are unable to subsist without a dependence, they have a fairer opportunity than men, if they continue long in that estate, to improve the principles they have sucked in and to ripen the seeds of learning which have been sown in their minds in their tender years. Besides, this will be an honest and profitable diversion to possess their minds, to keep out worse thoughts. Maids that cannot subsist without depending, as servants, may choose their places, to attend upon honourable persons, or to be employed in nurseries; by their conversation, to teach tongues to children, whilst carried in arms, who perhaps, when they find their own feet, will not abide the tedium of a school . . .

I need not show how any persons, thus brought up, if they happen to be widows, will be able to understand and manage their own affairs.

2. Women thus educated will be beneficial to their relations. It is a great blessing of God to a family to provide a good wife for the head, if it be eminent.

How many families have been ruined by this one thing, the bad education of women? Because the men find no satisfactory converse or entertainment at home, out of mere weariness they seek abroad; hence they neglect their business, spend their estates, destroy their bodies, and oftentimes damn their souls . . .

3. Women thus instructed will be beneficial to the nation. Look into all

history, those nations ever were, now are, and always shall be the worse nations, where women are undervalued; as in Russia, Ethiopia, and all the barbarous nations of the world. One great reason why our neighbours the Dutch have thriven to admiration, is the great care they take in the education of their women, from whence they are to be accounted most virtuous, and to be more useful than any women in the world. We cannot expect otherwise than to prevail against the ignorance, atheism, prophaneness, superstition, idolatry, lust, that reigns in the nation, than by a prudent, sober, pious, virtuous education of our daughters. Their learning would stir up our sons, whom God and nature hath made superior, to a just emulation.

Had we a sufficient number of females thus instructed to furnish the nurseries of noble families, their children might be improved in the knowledge of the learned tongues before they were aware, I mention this a third time, because it is of such moment and concern.

The memory of Queen Elizabeth is yet fresh. By her learning she was fitted for government, and swayed the sceptre of this nation with as great honour as any man before her.

Our very reformation of religion, seems to be begun and carried on by women.

Mistress Ann Askew, a person famous for learning and piety, so seasoned the queen and ladies at court, by her precepts and examples, and after sealed her profession with her blood, that the seed of reformation seemed to be sowed by her hand . . .

My intention is not to equalise women to men, much less to make them superior. They are the weaker sex, yet capable of impressions of great things, something like to the best of men . . .

Postscript

If any inquire where this education may be performed, such may be informed that a school is lately erected for gentlewomen at Tottenham high cross, within four miles of London, in the road to Ware, where Mistress Makin is governess, who was sometimes tutoress to the Princess Elizabeth, daughter to King Charles the First. Where, by the blessing of God, gentlewomen may be instructed in the principles of religion; and in all manner of sober and virtuous education: more particularly, in all things ordinarily taught in other schools:

Works of all sorts, as:

Dancing

Music

Singing

Writing

Keeping accounts

Half the time to be spent in these things

The other half to be employed in gaining the Latin and French tongues; and those that please may learn Greek and Hebrew, the Italian and Spanish: in all which this gentlewoman hath a competent knowledge.

Gentlewomen of eight or nine years old, that can read well, may be instructed in a year or two (according to their parts) in the Latin and French tongues; by such plain and short rules, accommodated to the *grammar* of the English tongue, that they may easily keep what they have learned, and recover what they shall lose; as those that learn music by notes.

Those that will bestow longer time, may learn the other languages, afore mentioned, as they please.

Repositories also for visibles shall be prepared; by which from beholding the things, gentlewomen may learn the names, natures, values, and use of herbs, shrubs, trees, mineral-juices, metals and stones.

Those that please may learn limning,²⁰ preserving, pastry and cookery.

Those that will allow longer time, may attain some general knowledge in astronomy, geography; but especially in arithmetic and history.

Those that think one language enough for a woman, may forbear the languages, and learn only experimental philosophy, and more or fewer of the other things aforementioned, as they incline.

The rate certain shall be £20 per annum: but if a competent improvement be made in the tongues, and the other things aforementioned, as shall be agreed upon, then something more will be expected. But the parent shall judge what shall be deserved by the undertaker.

Those that think these things impossible, may have further account every Tuesday at Mr Mason's coffee-house in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange; and Thursdays at the Bolt and Tun in Fleet Street, between the hours of three and six in the afternoons, by some person whom Mistress Makin shall appoint.