a question of the well-being of the husband, they should not merely not neglect such tasks but also should hate such neglect. I am happy to discover in the writings of that very learned poet and philosopher Homer that Andromache held such great love and affection for her husband Hector that she was very diligent and painstaking in everything that added to her husband’s honor and welfare, even to the point of feeding hay to his horses. Therefore, if a wife will be mindful of what duties are hers and how praise can be earned, she will realize she owes everything to her husband and will do her duties very well. If a generous husband wants to entertain others at home, the wife should not even avoid kitchen work, which was, after all, not completely unknown to such fine and valiant men as Achilles and Patroclus. For when Ulysses and Ajax came to him to be reconciled, Patroclus laid down his harp and eagerly undertook duties that would hardly have been worthy of an ordinary slave had they not been done for the sake of goodwill and hospitality. But enough of these matters. In any case I have proposed to treat them summarily and not to explain every detail, especially since these matters are discussed more fully and more expertly in the works of learned men than I am able to treat here. Therefore, let us turn to the topics remaining.

It is now proper to speak, as we have promised, about servants, who, provided they are not neglected, can add great luster to our houses and be useful and pleasant. So they will be if wives will instruct them carefully and if they will not get angry with them before, having warned them, they discover that they have made the same mistakes. I should like that wives, in these matters as in others, follow the example of the leaders of the bees, who allow no one under their control to be lazy or negligent. Marcus Cato the Elder absolutely followed this precept in household management, so that he, a censor himself, was thought to have fallen slowly, acting the part of a good man in this regard: he immediately sold those too old to work and always believed that it was in no way proper to keep useless slaves in his household.

Wives should adopt this ancient custom as their own, so that they might convert ignorant servants into skillful ones and then promote any maidservant who showed herself hardworking, faithful, and diligent at lesser tasks to the custody of the cellars. Thrifty wives constantly ought to seek out and appoint sober stewards for the provisions and address them courteously and be generous to them, so that by the great interest of the mistress the industry of the steward daily increases. They should feed their servants so that they will satisfy both their human needs and reward their constant labor. Wives should clothe their servants comfortably as befits the season, climate, and place. Moreover, as Hesiod advises, they should always be careful that servants are not separated from their children and families, for servants will always find a way to stay together with their own family, even secretly. Furthermore, servants will be very grateful if especially good medical care is provided when a member of their family is taken sick. For these acts of humanity, this solicitousness will make servants very conscientious and hardworking for the household.

We can see this, if we may return to the same example, in the case of the bees who never desert their leader on account of his care and provision for them. They always follow him wherever he goes as a sign of their goodwill.

This practice should not seem strange to anyone since similar expressions of gratitude are also to be found in other animals. This will be made clear from the next example which has been chosen out of many possible ones. During the Persian War the Athenians, in order to provide for their own safety, left the protection of the walls of their city and committed their state to the sea. While they were hurriedly leaving the shore, they saw the dog of Xanthippus the Elder consumed with desire to accompany his master, which he showed by running about, wagging his tail, whining, and barking. Therefore, Xanthippus, who was fleeing in a ship, stopped and waited for his dog, who was in the midst of the waves, swimming toward his master’s ship, and he finally gathered his anxious dog in the boat. Afterwards, when the dog died, Xanthippus wished that such devotion that ought not to be forgotten could be remembered, so he erected an honorable tomb for his dog in a certain high spot that for a long time thereafter was called “Dog-Grave.” In this way Xanthippus was
Chapter 9. On the Education of Children

Development and instruction of the children to whom the wealth is

brought and instruction have taken place according to the principles

and rules that have been laid down. The general discipline of the

household is based on the principles of education, and the

training of the children is conducted in accordance with those

principles.

In the household, the children are taught the principles of:


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feed their children milk and fondle them with embraces at the same
time, kiss them easily and comfortably, and, as they say, receive
them to their bosoms.

Thus Nature has assigned to women the duty of bearing and
rearing children not only by necessity but also with her singular
goodwill and love. Moreover, we can see a good argument in
favor of a mother exercising great care for her newborn babies if
women will but follow the habits of the terrible she-bear and other
beasts. After bears have given birth to their unformed cub, they
form and clean the cub with their tongues, as if the tongue were a
kind of tool, so they can be justly called not just the mother of the
cub but even its artificer. But why should we dwell on these small
matters? Surely Nature has bestowed such good feeling toward
newborn infants that we can see some animals who are timid
become very brave on account of their offspring, others who are
lazy become diligent, and others still who are slave to the stomach
and gluttony become very abstemious. Did not even the Homeric
bird endure hunger in order to provide for her young ones, and
did she not cheat her own stomach to keep them fed? Therefore,
mothers merit the severest censure if they neglect the care of their
children and live carelessly. I would have them avoid no hardship
in order to ensure that they make their children the best compan-
nions, comforters, and helpers in their old age. Therefore, if
mothers would be free from reproach they should not neglect their
offspring, but they should provide for both the bodies and souls of
their children, and they should nourish and suckle them at their
breasts. And the ones they nourished with their blood while still
unknown mothers now will raise, since they are now born and
have become human beings and are known and dear, since they
require greatly not simply the care of a nurse but that of a mother
as well. The wife of Marcus Cato the Censor fed her infant with
her own milk, and this custom continues among Roman women
down to the present age. In fact, because the fellowship of food
and nourishment always increases friendship and love, in order
to make the infants of her servants more loving to her own infants,
a wife should sometimes feed them at her own breasts. We beg
and exhort the most noble women to follow this example of feeding
her infant her own milk, for it is very important that an infant
should be nourished by the same mother in whose womb and by
whose blood he was conceived. No nourishment seems more
proper, none more wholesome than that same nourishment of body
that glowed with greatest life and heat in the womb and should
thus be given as known and familiar food to newborn infants. The
power of the mother's food most effectively lends itself to shaping
the properties of body and mind to the character of the seed. That
may be discerned quite clearly in many instances; for example,
when young goats are suckled with sheep's milk their hair becomes
much softer, and when lambs are fed on goats' milk, it is evident
that their fleeces become much coarser. In trees it is certain that
they are much more dependent on the qualities of both sap and soil
than on the quality of the seed; thus, if they are transplanted to
other ground when flourishing and well leafed, you will find them
changed enormously by the sap from the less fertile ground.
Therefore, noble women should always try to feed their own offspring
so that they will not degenerate from being fed on poorer, foreign
milk. But if, as often happens, mothers cannot for compelling
reasons suckle their own children, they ought to place them with
good nurses, not with slaves, strangers, or drunken and unchaste
women. They ought to give their infants to the care of those who
are freeborn, well mannered, and especially those endowed with
dignified speech. In this way the young infant will not imbibe
corrupt habits and words and will not receive, with his milk,
baseness, faults, and impure infirmities and thus be infected with a
dangerous degenerative disease in mind and body. For just as
the limbs of an infant can be properly and precisely formed and
strengthened, so can his manners be exactly and properly shaped
from birth. Therefore, mothers ought to be especially careful
in their choice of nurses for infants; at this tender age a child's un-
formed character is very susceptible to being molded, and, as we
impress a seal in soft wax, so the disposition and faults of a

98. Cf. Plutarch De amore prolis 3; Moralia 496C.
99. Cf. Plutarch De amore prolis 2; Moralia 494C.
100. Cf. Plutarch De amore prolis 2; Moralia 494D.
103. An echo of Plutarch De liberis educandis 5; Moralia 3D.
106. Cf. Plutarch De liberis educandis 5; Moralia 3DF.
107. Making Education Accessible to Children in Vulnerable Situations

108. The Importance of Early Childhood Education

110. The Challenge of Providing Quality Education in Conflict-Affected Areas

112. The Role of Technology in Education:

114. The Impact of Poverty on Education

116. Strategies for Improving Access to Education

118. The Need for Partnerships in Education: Government, NGOs, and Private Sector

120. The Future of Education: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Systems

122. Conclusion: Education for All
lying, or telling falsehoods, or for swearing falsely. Mothers should teach their children to say little at all times, and especially at banquets, unless they are ordered to speak, so that children do not become impudent or talkative—qualities that ought to be especially avoided in the young. It will be an impediment to proper education if children try to explain impudently what they themselves have not yet sufficiently understood. Therefore, you should recall that saying of Cato who, when he was as a youth blamed for his silence, said: “Then I shall not harm myself at all, until I shall say those things that are not worthy of being left unsaid.” If children will learn such precepts from their mothers as soon as their tender years permit, they will more happily and easily obtain the dignity and learning of their parents.

There are many other matters that I shall omit at present because they are peculiar to fathers, and I do so readily because I see that some people consider this subject of wifely duties to be so vast and infinite that the subject of fatherly duties can scarcely be sufficiently treated here. I can say nothing truer than that I never intended to discuss what might be done, but, rather, I have tried to describe what ought to be done. Therefore, who is such an unjust critic that if he will approve of a marriage done for the best reasons, (just as you have done) and will, in his choice of a wife, take a woman outstanding in her morals, suitable in her age, family, beauty, and wealth, loving to her husband, and modest and very skillful in domestic matters—who, I say, would be so pessimistic in those matters that he cannot wish for all these great qualities or imagine that wives so endowed ought not to perform all these important precepts? Therefore, my Lorenzo, your compatriots ought to be stirred by your example and follow you with great enthusiasm, for in Ginevra you have taken a wife who is a virgin well endowed with virtue, charm, a noble lineage, and great wealth. What more outstanding, more worthy model could I propose than yours? What more shining, more worthy example than yours, since in this outstanding city of Florence you are most eminently connected through your father, grandfather, and ancestors? You have taken a wife whose great wealth the entire world indeed admires but whose chastity, constancy, and prudence all men of goodwill esteem highly. They consider that you are blessed and happy to have her as a wife, as she is to have you as a husband. Since you have contracted such an outstanding and fine marriage, these same men ask God Immortal that you will have the best children who will become very honored citizens in your state. These matters might perhaps seem negligible since I am treating them, but indeed they are, in their own fashion, borne out in your marriage. Thus, surely young men who follow your example will profit more than only by following my precepts; just as laws are much more likely to be observed in a city when they are obeyed by its ruler, so, since your own choice of a wife is consistent with my teachings, we may hope that these precepts will be followed by the youth.

But, Lorenzo, as my treatise begins with you, so shall it end. You now have, instead of a present, my opinion on wifely duties, and I hope that whatever has been said by me, not to admonish you (as I made clear from the beginning) but to declare our mutual goodwill, will in large measure be kindly accepted by many others. I am certain that it will be well received by you, in whose name I undertook this endeavor. If when you are reading our little commentary you find anything that perhaps seems to be well or wisely stated, attribute it to that excellent man Zaccaria Trevisan, who is worthy of every sort of praise and whose memory I gladly cherish, and to my study of Greek literature. From the latter I have culled some things that pertain to our subject and inserted them here. Although I have been occupied with this treatise for only a few months, I still am happy to think that it will bear abundant and pleasant fruit. For I have profited so much from the learning and talent of that fine and very erudite man, Guarino da Verona, who was my tutor and my closest friend from among all my acquaintances. He was a guide to me and to several other first-rate people, in understanding and advancing our study of the humanities. And he was such a fine guide that, with his help, these divine studies, to which I have devoted myself from boyhood, have

111. Cf. Aulus Gellius Nostes Attice 11.11.1–2, for this distinction between telling falsehoods and lying.
114. Another reference to Barbaro’s debt to his Venetian model, Zaccaria Trevisan, and to his Greek teacher, Guarino da Verona.
become very enjoyable and profitable to me. Therefore, please accept gladly from me this wife's necklace (as I wish to call it), given on the occasion of your marriage. I know that you will esteem it greatly both because it is the sort of necklace that cannot be broken or destroyed by use (as others can) and because it is the product of my sincere friendship and of a mind that is entirely devoted to you.