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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Nietzsche
Stockton Turgenev Balzac Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Lawrence Lawrence Harte
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Harte
Andersen Andersen Andersen Burton Hesse
London Descartes Cervantes Cervantes Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Wells Wells Cooke
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Little Essays of Love and Virtue

Havelock Ellis

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Havelock Ellis

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7906-7

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PREFACE

In these Essays—little, indeed, as I know them to be, compared to the magnitude of their subjects—I have tried to set forth, as clearly as I can, certain fundamental principles, together with their practical application to the life of our time. Some of these principles were stated, more briefly and technically, in my larger *Studies* of sex; others were therein implied but only to be read between the lines. Here I have expressed them in simple language and with some detail. It is my hope that in this way they may more surely come into the hands of young people, youths and girls at the period of adolescence, who have been present to my thoughts in all the studies I have written of sex because I was myself of that age when I first vaguely planned them. I would prefer to leave to their judgment the question as to whether this book is suitable to be placed in the hands of older people. It might only give them pain. It is in youth that the questions of mature age can alone be settled, if they ever are to be settled, and unless we begin to think about adult problems when we are young all our thinking is likely to be in vain. There are but few people who are able when youth is over either on the one hand to re-mould themselves nearer to those facts of Nature and of Society they failed to perceive, or had not the courage to accept, when they were young, or, on the other hand, to mould the facts of the exterior world nearer to those of their own true interior world. One hesitates to bring home to them too keenly what they have missed in life. Yet, let us remember, even for those who have missed most, there always remains the fortifying and consoling thought that they may at least help to make the world better for those who come after them, and the possibilities of human adjustment easier for others than it has been for themselves. They must still remain true to their own traditions. We could not wish it to be otherwise.

The art of making love and the art of being virtuous;—two aspects of the great art of living that are, rightly regarded, harmonious and not at variance—remain, indeed, when we cease to misunderstand them, essentially the same in all ages and among all peoples. Yet, always and everywhere, little modifications become necessary, little, yet, like so many little things, immense in their signifi-

cance and results. In this way, if we are really alive, we flexibly adjust ourselves to the world in which we find ourselves, and in so doing simultaneously adjust to ourselves that ever-changing world, ever-changing, though its changes are within such narrow limits that it yet remains substantially the same. It is with such modification that we are concerned in these Little Essays.

H.E.

London, 1921

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LITTLE ESSAYS OF LOVE AND VIRTUE

CHAPTER I

CHILDREN AND PARENTS

The twentieth century, as we know, has frequently been called "the century of the child." When, however, we turn to the books of Ellen Key, who has most largely and sympathetically taken this point of view, one asks oneself whether, after all, the child's century has brought much to the child. Ellen Key points out, with truth, that, even in our century, parents may for the most part be divided into two classes: those who act as if their children existed only for their benefit, and those who act as if they existed only for their children's benefit, the results, she adds being alike deplorable. For the first group of parents tyrannise over the child, seek to destroy its individuality, exercise an arbitrary discipline too spasmodic to have any of the good effects of discipline and would model him into a copy of themselves, though really, she adds, it ought to pain them very much to see themselves exactly copied. The second group of parents may wish to model their children not after themselves but after their ideals, yet they differ chiefly from the first class by their over-indulgence, by their anxiety to pamper the child by yielding to all his caprices and artificially protecting him from the natural results of those caprices, so that instead of learning freedom, he has merely acquired self-will. These parents do not indeed tyrannise over their children but they do worse; they train their children to be tyrants. Against these two tendencies of our century Ellen Key declares her own Alpha and Omega of the art of education. Try to leave the child in peace; live your own life beautifully, nobly, temperately, and in so living you will sufficiently teach your children to live.

It is not my purpose here to consider how far this conception of the duty of parents towards children is justified, and whether or not peace is the best preparation for a world in which struggle dominates. All these questions about education are rather idle. There are endless theories of education but no agreement concerning the value of any of them, and the whole question of education remains

open. I am here concerned less with the duty of parents in relation to their children than with the duty of children in relation to their parents, and that means that I am not concerned with young children, to whom, that duty still presents no serious problems, since they have not yet developed a personality with self-conscious individual needs. Certainly the one attitude must condition the other attitude. The reaction of children against their parents is the necessary result of the parents' action. So that we have to pay some attention to the character of parental action.

We cannot expect to find any coherent or uniform action on the part of parents. But there have been at different historical periods different general tendencies in the attitude of parents towards their children. Thus if we go back four or five centuries in English social history we seem to find a general attitude which scarcely corresponds exactly to either of Ellen Key's two groups. It seems usually to have been compounded of severity and independence; children were first strictly compelled to go their parents' way and then thrust off to their own way. There seems a certain hardness in this method, yet it is doubtful whether it can fairly be regarded as more unreasonable than either of the two modern methods deplored by Ellen Key. On the contrary it had points for admiration. It was primarily a discipline, but it was regarded, as any fortifying discipline should be regarded, as a preparation for freedom, and it is precisely there that the more timid and clinging modern way seems to fail.

We clearly see the old method at work in the chief source of knowledge concerning old English domestic life, the *Paston Letters*. Here we find that at an early age the sons of knights and gentlemen were sent to serve in the houses of other gentlemen: it was here that their education really took place, an education not in book knowledge, but in knowledge of life. Such education was considered so necessary for a youth that a father who kept his sons at home was regarded as negligent of his duty to his family. A knowledge of the world was a necessary part, indeed the chief part, of a youth's training for life. The remarkable thing is that this applied also to a large extent to the daughters. They realised in those days, what is only beginning to be realised in ours, [1] that, after all, women live in the world just as much, though differently, as men live in the world, and that it is quite as necessary for the girl as for

the boy to be trained to the meaning of life. Margaret Paston, towards the end of the fifteenth century, sent her daughter Ann to live in the house of a gentleman who, a little later, found that he could not keep her as he was purposing to decrease the size of his household. The mother writes to her son: "I shall be fain to send for her and with me she shall but lose her time, and without she be the better occupied she shall oftentimes move me and put me to great unquietness. Remember what labour I had with your sister, therefore do your best to help her forth"; as a result it was planned to send her to a relative's house in London.

[1] This was illustrated in England when women first began to serve on juries. The pretext was frequently brought forward that there are certain kinds of cases and of evidence that do not concern women or that women ought not to hear. The pretext would have been more plausible if it had also been argued that there are certain kinds of cases and of evidence that men ought not to hear. As a matter of fact, whatever frontier there may be in these matters is not of a sexual kind. Everything that concerns men ultimately concerns women, and everything that concerns women ultimately concerns men. Neither women nor men are entitled to claim dispensation.

It is evident that in the fifteenth century in England there was a wide prevalence of this method of education, which in France, a century later, was still regarded as desirable by Montaigne. His reason for it is worth noting; children should be educated away from home, he remarks, in order to acquire hardness, for the parents will be too tender to them. "It is an opinion accepted by all that it is not right to bring up children in their parents' laps, for natural love softens and relaxes even the wisest." [2]

[2] Montaigne, *Essais*, Bk. I., ch. 25.

In old France indeed the conditions seem similar to those in England. The great serio-comic novel of Antoine de la Salle, *Petit Jean de Saintré*, shows us in detail the education and the adventures, which certainly involved a very early introduction to life, of a page in a great house in the fifteenth century. We must not take everything in this fine comedy too solemnly, but in the fourteenth century *Book of the Knight of the Tour-Landry* we may be sure that we have at its best the then prevailing view of the relation of a father to his tenderly

loved daughters. Of harshness and rigour in the relationship it is not easy to find traces in this lengthy and elaborate book of paternal counsels. But it is clear that the father takes seriously the right of a daughter to govern herself and to decide for herself between right and wrong. It is his object, he tells his girls, "to enable them to govern themselves." In this task he assumes that they are entitled to full knowledge, and we feel that he is not instructing them in the mysteries of that knowledge; he is taking for granted, in the advice he gives and the stories he tells them, that his "young and small daughters, not, poor things, overburdened with experience," already possess the most precise knowledge of the intimate facts of life, and that he may tell them, without turning a hair, the most outrageous incidents of debauchery. Life already lies naked before them: that he assumes; he is not imparting knowledge, he is giving good counsel. [3]

[3] If the Knight went to an extreme in his assumption of his daughters' knowledge, modern fathers often go to the opposite and more foolish extreme of assuming in their daughters an ignorance that would be dangerous even if it really existed. In *A Young Girl's Diary* (translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul), a work that is highly instructive for parents, and ought to be painful for many, we find the diarist noting at the age of thirteen that she and a girl friend of about the same age overheard the father of one of them — both well brought up and carefully protected, one Catholic and the other Protestant — referring to "those innocent children." "We did laugh so, WE and *innocent children*!!! What our fathers really think of us; we innocent!!! At dinner we did not dare look at one another or we should have exploded." It need scarcely be added that, at the same time, they were more innocent than they knew.

It is clear that this kind of education and this attitude towards children must be regarded as the outcome of the whole mediæval method of life. In a state of society where roughness and violence, though not, as we sometimes assume, chronic, were yet always liable to be manifested, it was necessary for every man and woman to be able to face the crudest facts of the world and to be able to maintain his or her own rights against them. The education that best secured that strength and independence was the best education and it necessarily involved an element of hardness. We must go back

earlier than Montaigne's day, when the conditions were becoming mitigated, to see the system working in all its vigour.

The lady of the day of the early thirteenth century has been well described by Luchaire in his scholarly study of French Society in the time of Philip Augustus. She was, he tells us, as indeed she had been in the preceding feudal centuries, often what we should nowadays call a virago, of violent temperament, with vivid passions, broken in from childhood to all physical exercises, sharing the pleasures and dangers of the knights around her. Feudal life, fertile in surprises and in risks, demanded even in women a vigorous temper of soul and body, a masculine air, and habits also that were almost virile. She accompanied her father or her husband to the chase, while in war-time, if she became a widow or if her husband was away at the Crusades, she was ready, if necessary, to direct the defences of the lordship, and in peace time she was not afraid of the longest and most dangerous pilgrimages. She might even go to the Crusades on her own account, and, if circumstances required, conduct a war to come out victoriously.

We may imagine the robust kind of education required to produce people of this quality. But as regards the precise way in which parents conducted that education, we have, as Luchaire admits, little precise knowledge. It is for the most part only indirectly, by reading between the lines, that we glean something as to what it was considered befitting to inculcate in a good household, and as what we thus learn is mostly from the writings of Churchmen it is doubtless a little one-sided. Thus Adam de Perseigne, an ecclesiastic, writes to the Countess du Perche to advise her how to live in a Christian manner; he counsels her to abstain from playing games of chance and chess, not to take pleasure in the indecent farces of actors, and to be moderate in dress. Then, as ever, preachers expressed their horror of the ruinous extravagance of women, their false hair, their rouge, and their dresses that were too long or too short. They also reprobated their love of flirtation. It was, however, in those days a young girl's recognised duty, when a knight arrived in the household, to exercise the rites of hospitality, to disarm him, give him his bath, and if necessary massage him to help him to go to sleep. It is not surprising that the young girl sometimes made love to the knight under these circumstances, nor is it surprising that he,

engaged in an arduous life and trained to disdain feminine attractions, often failed to respond.

It is easy to understand how this state of things gradually became transformed into the considerably different position of parents and child we have known, which doubtless attained its climax nearly a century ago. Feudal conditions, with the large households so well adapted to act as seminaries for youth, began to decay, and as education in such seminaries must have led to frequent mischances both for youths and maidens who enjoyed the opportunities of education there, the regret for their disappearance may often have been tempered for parents. Schools, colleges, and universities began to spring up and develop for one sex, while for the other home life grew more intimate, and domestic ties closer. Montaigne's warning against the undue tenderness of a narrow family life no longer seemed reasonable, and the family became more self-centred and more enclosed. Beneath this, and more profoundly influential, there was a general softening in social respects, and a greater expansiveness of affectional relationships, in reality or in seeming, within the home, compensating, it may be, the more diffused social feeling within a group which characterised the previous period.

So was cultivated that undue tenderness, deplored by Montaigne, which we now regard as almost normal in family life, and solemnly label, if we happen to be psycho-analysts, the Oedipus-complex or the Electra-complex. Sexual love is closely related to parental love; the tender emotion, which is an intimate part of parental love, is also an intimate part of sexual love, and two emotions which are each closely related to a third emotion cannot fail to become often closely associated to each other. With a little thought we might guess beforehand, even while still in complete ignorance of the matter, that there could not fail to be frequently a sexual tinge in the affection of a father for his daughter, of a mother for her son, of a son for his mother, or a daughter for her father. Needless to say, that does not mean that there is present any physical desire of sex in the narrow sense; that would be a perversity, and a rare perversity. We are here on another plane than that of crude physical desire, and are moving within the sphere of the emotions. But such emotions are often strong, and all the stronger because conscious of their own absolute rectitude and often masked under the shape of Duty. Yet

when prolonged beyond the age of childhood they tend to become a clog on development, and a hindrance to a wholesome life. The child who cherishes such emotion is likely to suffer infantile arrest of development, and the parent who is so selfish as to continue to expend such tenderness on a child who has passed the age of childhood, or to demand it, is guilty of a serious offence against that child.

That the intimate family life which sometimes resulted—especially when, as frequently happened, the seeming mutual devotion was also real—might often be regarded as beautiful and almost ideal, it has been customary to repeat with an emphasis that in the end has even become nauseous. For it was usually overlooked that the self-centred and enclosed family, even when the mutual affection of its members was real enough to bear all examination, could scarcely be more than partially beautiful, and could never be ideal. For the family only represents one aspect, however important an aspect, of a human being's functions and activities. He cannot, she cannot, be divorced from the life of the social group, and a life is beautiful and ideal, or the reverse, only when we have taken into our consideration the social as well as the family relationship. When the family claims to prevent the free association of an adult member of it with the larger social organisation, it is claiming that the part is greater than the whole, and such a claim cannot fail to be morbid and mischievous.

The old-world method of treating children, we know, has long ago been displaced as containing an element of harsh tyranny. But it was not perceived, and it seems indeed not even yet to be generally recognised, that the system which replaced it, and is only now beginning to pass away, involved another and more subtle tyranny, the more potent because not seemingly harsh. Parents no longer whipped their children even when grown up, or put them in seclusion, or exercised physical force upon them after they had passed childhood. They felt that that would not be in harmony with the social customs of a world in which ancient feudal notions were dead. But they merely replaced the external compulsion by an internal compulsion which was much more effective. It was based on the moral assumption of claims and duties which were rarely formulated because parents found it quite easy and pleasant to avoid

formulating them, and children, on the rare occasions when they formulated them, usually felt a sense of guilt in challenging their validity. It was in the nineteenth century that this state of things reached its full development. The sons of the family were usually able, as they grew up, to escape and elude it, although they thereby often created an undesirable divorce from the home, and often suffered, as well as inflicted, much pain in tearing themselves loose from the spiritual bonds—especially perhaps in matters of religion—woven by long tradition to bind them to their parents. It was on the daughters that the chief stress fell. For the working class, indeed, there was often the possibility of escape into hard labour, if only that of marriage. But such escape was not possible, immediately or at all, for a large number. During the nineteenth century many had been so carefully enclosed in invisible cages, they had been so well drilled in the reticences and the duties and the subserviencies that their parents silently demanded of them, that we can never know all the tragedies that took place. In exceptional cases, indeed, they gave a sign. When they possessed unusual power of intellect, or unusual power of character and will, they succeeded in breaking loose from their cages, or at least in giving expression to themselves. This is seen in the stories of nearly all the women eminent in life and literature during the nineteenth century, from the days of Mary Wollstonecraft onwards. The Brontës, almost, yet not quite, strangled by the fetters placed upon them by their stern and narrow-minded father, and enabled to attain the full stature of their genius only by that brief sojourn in Brussels, are representative. Elizabeth Barrett, chained to a couch of invalidism under the eyes of an imperiously affectionate father until with Robert Browning's aid she secretly eloped into the open air of freedom and health, and so attained complete literary expression, is a typical figure. It is only because we recognise that she is a typical figure among the women who attained distinction that we are able to guess at the vast number of mute inglorious Elizabeth Barretts who were never able to escape by their own efforts and never found a Browning to aid them to escape.

It is sometimes said that those days are long past and that young women, in all the countries which we are pleased to called civilised, are now emancipated, indeed, rather too much emancipated. Critics

come forward to complain of their undue freedom, of their irreverent familiarity to their parents, of their language, of their habits. But there were critics who said the very same things, in almost the same words, of the grandmothers of these girls! These incompetent critics are as ignorant of the social history of the past as they are of the social significance of the history of the present. We read in *Once a Week* of sixty years ago (10th August, 1861), the very period when the domestic conditions of girls were the most oppressive in the sense here understood, that these same critics were about at that time, and as shocked as they are now at "the young ladies who talk of 'awful swells' and 'deuced bores,' who smoke and venture upon free discourse, and try to be like men." The writer of this anonymous article, who was really (I judge from internal evidence) so distinguished and so serious a woman as Harriet Martineau, duly snubs these critics, pointing out that such accusations are at least as old as Addison and Horace Walpole; she remarks that there have no doubt been so-called "fast young ladies" in every age, "varying their doings and sayings according to the fopperies of the time." The question, as she pertinently concludes is, as indeed it still remains to-day: "Have we more than the average proportion? I do not know." Nor to-day do we know.

But while to-day, as ever before, we have a certain proportion of these emancipated girls, and while to-day, as perhaps never before, we are able to understand that they have an element of reason on their side, it would be a mistake to suppose that they are more than exceptions. The majority are unable, and not even anxious, to attain this light-hearted social emancipation. For the majority, even though they are workers, the anciently subtle ties of the home are still, as they should be, an element of natural piety, and, also, as they should not be, clinging fetters which impede individuality and destroy personal initiative.

We all know so many happy homes beneath whose calm surface this process is working out. The parents are deeply attached to their children, who still remain children to them even when they are grown up. They wish to guide them and mould them and cherish them, to protect them from the world, to enjoy their society and their aid, and they expect that their children shall continue indefinitely to remain children. The children, on their side, remain and

always will remain, tenderly attached to their parents, and it would really pain them to feel that they are harbouring any unwillingness to stay in the home even after they have grown up, so long as their parents need their attention. It is, of course, the daughters who are thus expected to remain in the home and who feel this compunction about leaving it. It seems to us—although, as we have seen, so unlike the attitude of former days—a natural, beautiful, and rightful feeling on both sides.

Yet, in the result, all sorts of evils tend to ensue. The parents often take as their moral right the services which should only be accepted, if accepted at all, as the offering of love and gratitude, and even reach a degree of domineering selfishness in which they refuse to believe that their children have any adult rights of their own, absorbing and drying up that physical and spiritual life-blood of their offspring which it is the parents' part in Nature to feed. If the children are willing there is nothing to mitigate this process; if they are unwilling the result is often a disastrous conflict. Their time and energy are not their own; their tastes are criticised and so far as possible crushed; their political ideas, if they have any, are treated as pernicious; and—which is often on both sides the most painful of all—differences in religious belief lead to bitter controversy and humiliating recrimination. Such differences in outlook between youth and age are natural and inevitable and right. The parents themselves, though they may have forgotten it, often in youth similarly revolted against the cherished doctrines of their own parents; it has ever been so, the only difference being that to-day, probably, the opportunities for variation are greater. So it comes about that what James Hinton said half a century ago is often true to-day: "Our happy Christian homes are the real dark places of the earth."

It is evident that the problem of the relation of the child to the parent is still incompletely solved even in what we consider our highest civilisation. There is here needed an art in which those who have to exercise it can scarcely possess all the necessary skill and experience. Among trees and birds and beasts the art is surer because it is exercised unconsciously, on the foundation of a large tradition in which failure meant death. In the common procreative profusion of those forms of life the frequent death of the young was a matter of little concern, but biologically there was never any sacri-

fice of the offspring to the well-being of the parents. Whenever sacrifice is called for it is the parents who are sacrificed to their offspring. In our superior human civilisation, in which quantity ever tends to give place to quality, the higher value of the individual involves an effort to avoid sacrifice which sometimes proves worse than abortive. An avian philosopher would be unlikely to feel called upon to denounce nests as the dark places of the earth, and in laying down our human moral laws we have always to be aware of forgetting the fundamental biological relationship of parent and child to which all such moral laws must conform. To some would-be parents that necessity may seem hard. In such a case it is well for them to remember that there is no need to become parents and that we live in an age when it is not difficult to avoid becoming a parent. The world is not dying for lack of parents. On the contrary we have far too many of them—ignorant parents, silly parents, unwilling parents, undesirable parents—and those who aspire to the high dignity of creating the future race, let them be as few as they will—and perhaps at the present time the fewer the better—must not refuse the responsibilities of that position, its pains as well as its joys.

In our human world, as we know, the moral duties laid upon us—the duties in which, if we fail, we become outcasts in our own eyes or in those of others or in both—are of three kinds: the duties to oneself, the duties to the small circle of those we love, and the duties to the larger circle of mankind to which ultimately we belong, since out of it we proceed, and to it we owe all that we are. There are no maxims, there is only an art and a difficult art, to harmonise duties which must often conflict. We have to be true to all the motives that sanctify our lives. To that extent George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver was undoubtedly right. But the renunciation of the Self is not the routine solution of every conflict, any more than is the absolute failure to renounce. In a certain sense the duty towards the self comes before all others, because it is the condition on which duties towards others possess any significance and worth. In that sense, it is true according to the familiar saying of Shakespeare,—though it was only Polonius, the man of maxims, who voiced it,—that one cannot be true to others unless one is first true to oneself,

and that one can know nothing of giving aught that is worthy to give unless one also knows how to take.

We see that the problem of the place of parents in life, after their function of parenthood has been adequately fulfilled, a problem which offers no difficulties among most forms of life, has been found hard to solve by Man. At some places and periods it has been considered most merciful to put them, to death; at others they have been almost or quite deified and allowed to regulate the whole lives of their descendants. Thus in New Caledonia aged parents, it is said by Mrs. Hadfield, were formerly taken up to a high mountain and left with enough food to last a few days; there was at the same time great regard for the aged, as also among the Hottentots who asked: "Can you see a parent or a relative shaking and freezing under a cold, dreary, heavy, useless old age, and not think, in pity of them, of putting an end to their misery?" It was generally the opinion of the parents themselves, but in some countries the parents have dominated and overawed their children to the time of their natural death and even beyond, up to the point of ancestor worship, as in China, where no man of any age can act for himself in the chief matters of life during his parents' life-time, and to some extent in ancient Rome, whence an influence in this direction which still exists in the laws and customs of France. [4] Both extremes have proved compatible with a beautifully human life. To steer midway between them seems to-day, however, the wisest course. There ought to be no reason, and under happy conditions there is no reason, why the relationship between parent and child, as one of mutual affection and care, should ever cease to exist. But that the relationship should continue to exist as a tie is unnatural and tends to be harmful. At a certain stage in the development of the child the physical tie with the parent is severed, and the umbilical cord cut. At a later stage in development, when puberty is attained and adolescence is feeling its way towards a complete adult maturity, the spiritual tie must be severed. It is absolutely essential that the young spirit should begin to essay its own wings. If its energy is not equal to this adventure, then it is the part of a truly loving parent to push it over the edge of the nest. Of course there are dangers and risks. But the worst dangers and risks come of the failure to adventure, of the refusal to face the tasks of the world and to assume the full func-