Mary Barber, â??Written for my Son, and spoken by him in School, upon his Masterâ??s first bringing in a Rodâ?•

Description

MARY BARBER

â??Written for my Son, and spoken by him in School, upon his Masterâ??s first bringing in a Rodâ?•

Our Master, in a fatal Hour,
Brought in this Rod, to shew his Powâ??r.
O dreadful Birch! O baleful Tree!
Thou Instrument of Tyranny!
Thou deadly Damp to youthful Joys!
The Sight of thee our Peace destroys.
Not DAMOCLES, with greater Dread,
Beheld the Weapon oâ??er his Head.

That Sage was surely more discerning,
Who taught to play us into Learning,
By â??graving Letters on the Dice:
May Heavâ??n reward the kind Device,
And crown him with immortal Fame,
Who taught at once to read and game!

Take my Advice; pursue that Rule;
Youâ??ll make a Fortune by your School.
Youâ??ll soon have all the elder Brothers,
And be the Darling of their Mothers.

O May I live to hail the Day,
When Boys shall go to School to play!
To Grammar Rules weâ??ll bid Defiance;
For Play will then become a Science.

NOTES:

3 *Birch* â??A bunch of birch-twigs bound together to form an instrument for the flagellation of school-boys and of juvenile offenders; a birch-rodâ?• (*OED*).

7 *DAMOCLES* (fl. 4th Century BCE), courtier of Dionysious I of Syracuse (c. 430 BC-337 BC). â??Damocles, a flatterer, having extolled the happiness of Dionysius tyrant of Syracuse, was placed by him at a banquet with a sword suspended over his head by a hair, to impress upon him the perilous nature of that happiness. Used by simile of an imminent danger, which may at any moment descend upon oneâ?• (*OED*).

9 *Sage* â??See Locke upon educationâ?• [Authorâ??s Note]. An allusion to John Lockeâ??s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*(1693), a popular treatise on the education of gentlemen in that period.

11 *â??graving Letters on the Dice* A playful approach to education using dice with letters on each side.

15 *pursue that Rule* â??Bowing to his Masterâ?• [Authorâ??s Note].

SOURCE: *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (London, 1735), pp. 36-37. [Google Books]

Edited by Ty Garvin