

much by the machinations of their minds. When he has learned with pleasure the story of Phaeton, the teacher should show that he represents a prince, who while still headstrong with the ardor of youth, but with no supporting wisdom, seized the reins of government and turned everything into ruin for himself and the whole world. When he has finished the story of the Cyclops who was blinded by Ulysses, the teacher should say in conclusion that the prince who has great strength of body, but not of mind, is like Polyphemus.

Who has not heard with interest of the government of the bees and ants? When temptations begin to descend into the youthful heart of the prince, then his tutor should point out such of these stories as belong in his education. He should tell him that the king never flies far away, has wings smaller in proportion to the size of its body than the others, and that he alone has no sting. From this the tutor should point out that it is the part of a good prince always to remain within the limits of his realm; his reputation for clemency should be his special form of praise. The same idea should be carried on throughout. It is not the province of this treatise to supply a long list of examples, but merely to point out the theory and the way. If there are any [traits] that seem too coarse, the teacher should polish and smooth them over with a winning manner of speech.⁴

So Erasmus directs that not only Aesop, but also moralizable stories from Ovid and Virgil be treated in this same fashion.

It may be worth noting here that Martin Luther also approved Cato and Aesop highly when so treated. He says,

It is a special Grace of God, that *Cato's* little book and the Fables of *Aesop* have been preserved in Scholes; for they are both natural and excellent books. *Cato* hath good words and fine precepts which are very profitable in this life. But *Aesop* hath excellling sweet *res & picturas*, i.e. matter and the pictures or representations of things . . . So far as I am able to understand, next unto the Bible, wee have no better books then *Catonis scripta, & fabulas Aesopi*, the Works of *Cato*, and the Fables of *Aesop* . . . for their writings are better then all the tattered sentences of the Philosophers and Lawyers.⁵

Next to the Bible itself! This method of moralizing was a general method, to be applied to all the early grammar school authors until the boy was old enough to undertake a systematic study of the principles of religion and philosophy.

⁴ Born, *Christian Prince*, pp. 146-148. The rendering is not very exact, but will serve the present purpose. The last sentence unemended is a complete misunderstanding of Erasmus, who was speaking of smoothing out flaws in the character of the boy (see Elyot's statement above), not of coarse stories—they did not trouble Erasmus very much.

⁵ Luther, *Colloquia Mensalia* (London, 1652, personal), p. 532; Coleridge's marked copy—he blue-pencilled this passage—which he thought to be a better translation than his copy of 1791, which is now in B. M., C. 45. i. 16. For one use of Aesop's fables, the adages, and similes about 1549, see *Documents Relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge*, Vol. III, pp. 53-54.