

**THE CHILDREN AT THE
PHALANSTERY:
A FAMILIAR DIALOGUE
ON EDUCATION**

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The Children at the Phalanstery: A Familiar Dialogue on Education by F. Cantagrel

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F. CANTAGREL

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MORAL EDUCATION.

* * * ALL the social calamities of which men complain so loudly, which are attributed by turns to philosophy, to fanaticism, to the passions, to fatality, perhaps proceed from a single cause, from falsified and incomplete moral education.

By *falsified* moral education, I understand that which is solely directed to abstractions, which neglects to present in their true light and to take account of, the essential requirements of human nature, the usages, the wants and characteristic necessities of the social movement, such as it is; the opinions which govern this movement, and the real value of the pleasures and interests of which the affairs of the world are composed.

By *incomplete* moral education, I understand not only that which fails to impress individuals sufficiently to lead them to that state of *second nature* of which I have spoken; I indicate also by this word *incomplete*, that moral education which does not extend to the whole population, which is restricted to certain privileged classes, which leaves on one side the class of proletaires, of workmen, of poor people, whom certain persons, in their proud contempt, find it so convenient to call the vile populace, and who are a vile populace only because the leaders of the nations do not wish, or do not know how, to elevate them to a condition of comfort—without which, with some rare exceptions, no good education is possible.

Each individual is endowed with a shade of character which is peculiar to himself; this character is developed for good or for evil, for the advantage or the disadvantage of the individual and of the public, according to the good or evil impulse which is given to him by social influences, and especially by moral education.

Jacques belongs to the class of street-porters, his wife is a washerwoman. Jacques's character is lively, ardent; Jane's is shiftless. From their earliest years, with parents of the same occupation, for all moral education they have acquired coarse and quarrelsome habits, the only ones they have had an opportunity to contract: they were barely able to attend the infant schools and the parish catechising; the poverty of their homes made them venal while very young; while children they eagerly executed little commissions for a few coppers. Later in life, they per-

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1847

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BY F. CANTAGREL.

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## PREFACE.

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THERE are few households in which the children are not heard crying from morning till night: the mother-in-law says it is the fault of her daughter-in-law; the parents and friends, that it is the fault of the child; uninterested persons make the consoling reflection, that in a more advanced age more serious causes of sorrow will incessantly be found. In the meanwhile the mother and the child console each other by a tender embrace; joy and smiles reappear upon all faces. A few moments afterwards, fresh tears—

Whom must we decide to be right, and whom wrong? We must first decide that the children are right, and then that the grown persons are wrong. Who pretend to be reasonable? The grown persons certainly; and there they are about the children, worrying, fussing, without being able to divine the cause of those tears; still more, they themselves very often cause those innocent tears to flow, by their ignorance, their harshness, their fan-  
oies; they pretend to regulate at their will the tastes of those children, and their steps, their words and their gestures.

But no, we must not yet blame the parents and the friends; alas! they do what they can, they do what they have been taught, and it is not their fault if they do not succeed any better. We must blame all those philosophers, all those august doctors, who pretend to govern all things, and who know nothing; they think they have penetrated the secrets of nature, and during the ages that great and small have lived in tears, they have not known how to dry a single one; and, very often, their false wisdom has mingled blood with the tears of the poor human race.

Oh! their pride may take offence! "Do we pay any attention to those little monkeys?" they will haughtily reply; "such cares are unworthy of us, we do not stoop to such low details."

And you do well ; the least intelligent mother knows more on that point than all your presumptuous systems ; but your fault, your inexcusable fault, is in extolling a social order so false, so badly constructed, that the best desires of the mother cannot succeed in any manner, the best instincts of the child cannot be brought forth, and everything goes every moment in opposition to nature and the divine laws.

All things are bound together in nature, and if your social order engenders evil and infinite suffering for men and for women of all ranks and all conditions, it is a very simple thing that it should produce a result quite as disastrous in the case of children. And look at those children—I do not even speak of poor children, I speak only of rich children, or those in comfortable circumstances ; see those little things, imprisoned, constrained, tortured in their instinctive movements. Is there but one in a family ? he is overwhelmed with murderous caresses, with idolatrous and destructive attentions ; constantly deprived of the sight, of the company of other children, he has around him, only smiling faces, it may be—but those smiles are often not young enough to satisfy him. Is there any spectacle more affecting than that which chance sometimes presents to us, that of a young child who can see, touch, embrace, another child of its own age ? there is a moment of happiness which is worth more to him than all the caresses of his parents, excepting those of his mother.

If, on the contrary, there are several brothers and sisters in the same family, the difference in tastes and characters, and very often the unjust preferences of parents, excite incessant quarrels and interminable bickerings.

Must these children be separated then ? No ; but they must have a greater liberty, that is, they must be placed in a more numerous infantile assemblage, where they can be developed more freely, and choose their companions according to the agreements or the contrasts of their characters.

Too restricted relations of the child in the narrow circle of his parents, or of his brothers and sisters, and the consequent compression, stifling of his instincts—this is the shoal on which the education of early childhood incessantly strikes, or is wrecked, without this fact having been as yet understood.

The following dialogue contains the development of this idea, applied to the education of early childhood, and consequently to that of youth.

It is extracted from a work published in 1841, by M. F. Can- tagrel, under the title of "Le Fou du Palais-Royal," in which the author has stated, under the varied form of a dialogue, the most important points of the societary Theory of Fourier.

Some of the words used by the author being either new, or employed in a special sense, it is necessary to give some definitions.

The reader may know that Fourier has stated scientifically the law of the conditions according to which the association of men among themselves must be established: it is the aggregate of Fourier's views that we call the *societary Theory*.

In going over the history of the past, Fourier discerned in the different situations in which humanity has found itself placed by turns, certain phases which it was easy to distinguish by particular traits: these are, *Savageism*, *Patriarchalism* and *Barbarism*. There is, moreover, a fourth period, to which Europe, particularly, has attained in our day: this is *Civilization*.

In the writings of Fourier, and in the following dialogue, this word *Civilization* is not therefore, most frequently, used in its customary signification, which vaguely indicates the general state of the intellectual and moral culture of a people; it has a more restricted, and more precise meaning; it indicates only a special period, one of the stations in the advance of Humanity.

In the same manner as Fourier had distinguished several successive periods in the past, so he foresaw them in the future: the most advanced of all, the most beautiful, the most rich, the most happy, he calls *Harmony*, wishing to indicate thereby the agreement which will then exist among all the inhabitants of the globe, and their obedience to the laws of the Creator. *Harmonian*, means the man of the ages of *Harmony*.

Every day, in our present society, we designate by the words, *savage*, *barbarian*, the men who live, or have lived, in the periods of *savageism* and of *barbarism*, evidently inferior to the period of *civilization*. Let no one be shocked therefore, we entreat, if we sometimes apply, with a slight shade of disdain, the name *civilizee*