

Terence on Fatherly Lenience



Children are in need of a loving father, not of a disciplinarian governor.

Henry Thomas Riley. (Tr. & Ed.). *The Comedies of Terence – The Brothers*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896, — *Adelphoi*, 26-77. Frontispiece: Boys eating grapes and melon (1645–46) Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Alte Pinakothek.

This comedy play was first performed in 160 B.C. at the Funeral Games of Aemilius Paulus,¹ which were celebrated by Q. Fabius Maximus and P. Cornelius Africanus. L. Atilius Praenestinus and Minutius Prothimus performed it. Flaccus, the freedman of Claudius, composed the music for Sarranian flutes.² Taken from the Greek of Menander, L. Anicius and M. Cornelius being Consuls.³ After <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Ter.+Ad.+toc&redirect=true>

MICIO AND DEMEA ARE TWO BROTHERS OF DISSIMILAR TEMPER. Demea is married, and lives a country life, while his brother remains single, and resides in Athens. Demea has two sons, the elder of whom, Æschinus, has been adopted by Micio, who allows him to gratify his inclinations without restraint. But disciplinarian Demea favours a less lenient attitude towards his son . . .

Act One, Scene I

Enter Micio, calling to a servant within.

Storax! Æschinus has not returned [home] from the entertainment last night, nor any of the servants who went to fetch him.⁴ (To himself) Really, they say it with reason, if you are absent anywhere, or if you stay abroad at any time, 'twere better for that to happen which [your] wife says against you, and which in her passion she imagines in her mind, than the things which fond parents [fancy]. A wife, if you stay long abroad, either imagines that you are in love or are beloved, or that you are drinking and indulging your inclination, and that you only are taking your pleasure,

¹ *Of Aemilius Paulus*: This Play (from the Greek *Ἀδελφοί*, Brothers) was performed at the Funeral Games of Lucius Aemilius Paulus, who was surnamed Macedonicus, from having gained a victory over Perseus, King of Macedon. He was so poor at the time of his decease, that they were obliged to sell his estate in order to pay his widow her dower. Q. Fabius Maximus and P. Cornelius Africanus here mentioned were not, as some have thought, the Curule Aediles, but two sons of Aemilius Paulus, who had taken the surnames of the families into which they had been adopted.

² *Sarranian flutes*: The “Sarranian” or “Tyrian” pipes, or flutes, are supposed to have been of a quick and mirthful tone; Madame Dacier has consequently with much justice suggested that the representation being on the occasion of a funeral, the title has not come down to us in a complete form, and that it was performed with the Lydian, or grave, solemn pipe, alternately with the Tyrian. This opinion is also strengthened by the fact that Donatus expressly says that it was performed to the music of Lydian flutes.

³ *Being Consuls*: L. Anicius Gallus and M. Cornelius Cethegus were Consuls in the year from the Building of the City 592, and B.C. 161.

⁴ *To fetch him*: “*Advorsum ierant.*” On the duties of the “*adversitores*,” see the Notes to Bohn’s translation of Plautus.

while she herself is miserable. As for myself, in consequence of my son not having returned home, what do I imagine? In what ways am I not disturbed? For fear lest he may either have taken cold,⁵ or have fallen down somewhere, or have broken some [limb]. Oh dear! that any man should take it into his head, or find out what is dearer [to him] than he is to himself! And yet he is not my son, but my brother's. He is quite different in disposition. I, from my very youth upward, have lived a comfortable town life, and [taken] my ease; and, what they esteem a piece of luck, I have never had a wife. He, on the contrary to all this, has spent his life in the country, [and] has always lived laboriously and penuriously. He married a wife, [and] has two sons. This one the elder of them, I have adopted. I have brought him up from an infant, [and] considered [and] loved him as my own. In him I centre my delight; this [object] alone is dear to me. On the other hand, I take all due care that he may hold me equally dear. I give — I overlook; I do not judge it necessary to exert my authority in everything; in fine, the things that youth prompts to, [and] that others do unknown to their fathers, I have used my son not to conceal from me. For he, who, as the practice is, will dare to tell a lie to or to deceive his father, will still more dare [to do so] to others. I think it better to restrain children through a sense of shame and liberal treatment, than through fear. On these points my brother does not agree with me, nor do they please him. He often comes to me exclaiming,

What are you about, Micio?

Why do you ruin for us this youth?

Why does he intrigue?

Why does he drink?

Why do you supply him with the means for these goings on?

You indulge him with too much dress; you are very inconsiderate.

He himself is too strict, beyond what is just and reasonable; and he is very much mistaken, in my opinion, at all events, who thinks that an authority is more firm or more lasting which is established by force, than that which is founded on affection. Such is my mode of reasoning; and thus do I persuade myself. He, who, compelled by harsh treatment, does his duty, so long as he thinks it will be known, is on his guard: if he hopes that it will be concealed, he again returns to his natural bent. He whom you have secured by kindness, acts from inclination; he is anxious to return like for like; present and absent, he will be the same. This is the duty of a parent, to accustom a son to do what is right rather of his own choice, than through fear of another. In this the father differs from the master: he who cannot do this, let him confess that he does not know how to govern children.



⁵ *Either have taken cold*: Westerhovius observes that this passage seems to be taken from one in the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus, l. 721, *et seq.*: “Troth, if I had had them, enough anxiety should I have had from my children; I should have been everlastingly tormented in mind: but if perchance one had had a fever, I think I should have died. Or if one in liquor had tumbled anywhere from his horse, I should have been afraid that he had broken his legs or neck on that occasion.” It may be remarked that there is a great resemblance between the characters of Micio here and Periplecomenus in the “*Miles Gloriosus*,” or the “*Swaggering Soldier*,” a play written by Titus Maccius Plautus.

Memorable sentences by Publius Terentius Afer.

- ✓ Fortune helps the brave.
- ✓ I am a man, and whatever concerns humanity is of interest to me.
- ✓ Moderation in all things.
- ✓ Nothing is said that has not been said before.
- ✓ That is true wisdom, to know how to alter one's mind when occasion demands it.
- ✓ Their silence is sufficient praise.
- ✓ There is a demand in these days for men who can make wrong appear right.
- ✓ There is nothing so easy but that it becomes difficult when you do it reluctantly.
- ✓ Too much liberty corrupts us all.



The Two Brothers



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