



Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648-1815

Westphalian Nobleman Clemens August Droste zu Vischering Provides Instructions on the Duties of his Children's Tutor (1776)

Children in upper-class households were entrusted to the care of servants and tutors, whose own behavior and manners often did not conform to aristocratic standards. Here, the nobleman Clemens August Droste zu Vischering warns his children's tutor against behavioral transgressions, including fraternization with the household's domestic staff. Among other things, he also emphasizes the importance of teaching his children to speak German with a proper upper-class accent.

Pro memoria by the Hereditary Sewer Clemens August Droste zu Vischering to his Court Tutor Windeck (1776)

1. [. . .] and if such [the children crying] happens regularly in order to inflict something unpleasant on the court tutor out of habit, to tire him of his punishments or admonitions, whereby the child may actually succeed if the court tutor does not care to bother with such things anyway, but instead prefers to talk to other people rather than the children, and even deems it impossible to always be able to direct his thoughts and eyes to the children, and considers the hours spent with the children unpleasant.

2. The court tutor must not be idle when with the children, though he must not become engrossed in his activities in such a way as not to observe the children always in all of their manners otherwise. It is certain that the example of the court tutor has a great effect on the children; therefore, his manners and conduct must be beyond reproach, and he must always act as though he were in the company of distinguished persons; therefore, it is very disagreeable to the parents when they find the court tutor in the room, hat on his head, and lying on a chair after the fashion of domestics and students, and when they notice that the court tutor always has his fingers in his face, and has his hands on the bread at the table, and leans against the wall, any table, or chairs while standing, wipes knives and forks on the whole loaf of bread instead of cutting off a piece first, wipes his eyes, too, or even sneezes into a napkin, which serves only for wiping one's mouth, and does similar things. By his example, the court tutor must attempt to make up for the faults he finds in people, even older ones. He must also be very polite, yet without affectation, in the company of both children and others. One expects more from him than others. Therefore, if the court tutor has bad manners, the parents, in addition to being annoyed for the sake of the children, have to be ashamed of him in the presence of others. In order to acquire and maintain good manners, the court tutor must seek to associate with peers or higher-ranking persons, and not to keep

extended company with domestics, court servants in livery, musicians, etc., much less have a glass of wine with them.

3. The court tutor must entertain the children innocently and cheerfully during walks and at other times; answer their questions politely and sensibly, and get involved in conversation with them, and, in case they ramble on, guide them back to themselves or else mete out punishment. Incidentally, I am referring to the instruction that I have conveyed to you, the court tutor, last summer in writing, which is intended for diligent re-reading. [. . .] For instance, the court tutor must urge the children to practice pure pronunciation, especially in public prayers, and to say them in an edifying way, not rattle them off quickly, nor say the words of benediction without crossing themselves, as happened very often last year during evening prayers, thus setting a bad example.

[. . .]

I feel confirmed in these hopes [for improvement], since for the last four weeks I seem to have detected in the court tutor more diligence directed at the children. In particular, I recommend teaching the children the new pronunciation, good posture, and order in the keeping of their personal things, just as I will, as is known, certainly accuse him and hold him responsible for bad habits, if they are to take root with and become permanent in the children. Finally, in this connection, I will not conceal the fact that once more this April, I had to discover with great displeasure proof of the court tutor's meager concern for the children entrusted to him, when instead of attending after supper to the children, one of whom, Caspar, had a cough, he preferred the company of Mr. Zuckmann and the housekeeper over his foremost duty; incidentally, there is a great difference between adults and children having something wrong with them, in which case even the smallest detail requires attention [. . .] and at any rate, interaction with ladies-in-waiting, housekeepers, and servants is not appropriate for a court tutor.

Vorhelm, 4 May 1776

C.A. m. F. h. Droste von Vischering.

Source: From the Diocesan Archive of Münster, Archive Droste-Vischering-Darfeld, Papers of Clemens August Droste zu Vischering, No. 1d.

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