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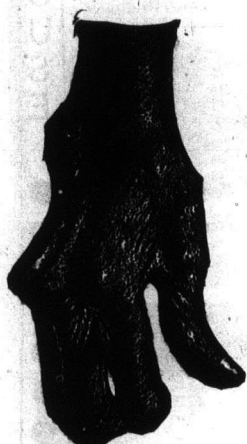
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## The Punishment of Children.

By M. JAMIESON.

If corporal punishment of children can be shown to be unjust it will follow by inevitable consequence that it is unwise. Wisdom and injustice having no company with each other, our examination of the questions might confine itself to the first, if we sought to settle the difficulties and answer subtle questions from the premises of foregone conclusion.

But since, at least, there may be times when corporal punishment might be received as just, it seems fair to attempt a distinction between methods, and come to an understanding of their wisdom or the lack of it, their justice or injustice, as the case may be.

Some parents act upon the impossible supposition that a whipping is the only way of correction; some suppose it is the surest, quickest, and most convenient, and here I feel is much of the difficulty—the impatience of the parent. All of these tacitly suppose a rule that most children need it, with an exception of a few who do not. But I do not hesitate to say that undoubtedly the rule is the reverse of this, and while I admit that some children may be incorrigible without corporal punishment, I insist that the great majority of children may be corrected without it.

Right here it seems to the point that one reason why corporal punishment of children is sometimes genuinely necessary, under the given circumstances, is that it is inevitable where the parents are capable of no better method. Where correction cannot proceed from love, with concern for the welfare of the child, and that wisdom that is capable of rule, it will be seen that the defects of the parent will largely mold the discipline of the child.

### Rule by Love, If Possible.

Is corporal punishment ever advisable? I would answer that it is never advisable, but sometimes inevitable; never to be advised, any more than war should be encouraged, but where all other intelligent and conscientious means fail, either because the child is such a child that he may not be persuaded otherwise, or in such a mood that he cannot appreciate other methods at the time, then it were better he were spanked than that he rule. Again, as said before, the parent must look within himself, prove to himself that by love and wisdom he is capable of rule, before he lays it down that no other means than force will mold the child. When should it be applied? When all other and better methods fail. Probably, also, in the last analysis of the question, the parent whose heart and mind cannot rule the child, cannot rule the child.

For the bringing up of children is constructive or a failure. Iconoclastic methods do not effect construction and every violence produces its own kind and fruit. We do not gather figs from thistles. How young should it be applied?

### Bodily Punishment at First.

It is said by oculists that development proceeds by sevens of years, and that a child is conscious first bodily, so far as normal conscious development goes; then in those primary activities of the soul that characterize the maturer child; and finally, spiritually. Development undoubtedly does proceed by sevens of years, and Roman Catholic theology teaches that the age of seven years represents the point of transition from the unevolved state of innocence to that of moral consciousness. Therefore, it seems, that while the mischief of a young child should be viewed apart from that conscious and responsible guilt of later years, nevertheless as the child is living mainly in the bodily senses, it will be found that here is the point at which, being most conscious, he is most effectively teachable. Therefore, in answer to the question, How young should it be applied? I would answer, before the age of seven, and always with a guard against roughness or carelessness, and always without bad temper, for as fire appeals to fire on

the physical plane, all experience proves it does on the plane of the emotions. So that if we would quiet someone, we must ourselves keep quiet. Moreover and above this, and right here in answer to the question, If it be wrong in itself, why is it so? I think our question is answered. Anger, bad temper, and ill will are near akin to hatred, and it has been asked, "Hatest a man the thing he would not kill?" Of course this is speaking of that representative, that developed hatred that brawls and warfare exemplify, and the lesser degree of hatred, or even, ill will or bad temper, is ever ready to risk injury to the person who provokes the passion.

So much of the willingness to risk bodily injury that the blindness of bad temper provokes, but there is another and even deeper matter here: The total disregard for the physical effects of this emotional assault and battery upon the child. The mere physical chastisement were enough alone to stir the temper of the child, but this, ensouled with the bad temper of a provoked parent, is twice too much.

### Baffling Cases.

But there are other chastisements that, as a rule, may have much the better of the spanking as a discipline. Nevertheless, I have known children who do not appreciate either the threat to deprive them of something for which they care, or the privation when one fulfils the threat. They stare stoically when the threat is made, and utter no complaint when it is fulfilled; but seem, in some manner of good nature, to forget both, showing that their naughtiness was mere mischief. This is sometimes true of young children, seldom of older ones, and is more characteristic of the innocent state than of the guilty. Therefore it is clear that the method must vary with the temperament of the child; that a spanking (not a thrashing) may humble a small child when he cannot, apparently, be corrected otherwise; that he will be more susceptible to a physical reminder of some sort because he is principally conscious physically; but that there are many ways and often better ways than whipping. Is it (corporal punishment) more needed in the case of boys than of girls? It would seem to me that of the severe disciplines, in general and particular, boys are the more in need of them and the better able physically and temperamentally to take them, and that though girls may be very imprudent, boys are the more apt to be obdurate and unyielding. The child who is manifestly in the wrong must yield. That is our first postulate of government. Then there comes the available means—then the better means.

I know a young child who is humbled and reduced to order by an occasional spanking (not thrashing) who does not appreciate threats, withholdings, or privations, owing, I am sure, to his constitutional good nature; whose spirits are so alive and whose physical condition so vigorous that he is simply like a colt turned loose, and whose punishable doings are mere mischief, but, nevertheless, mischief that must know or learn its bounds. Lock him in a room, and he will have just a beautiful time. But it is only once in a while that he ever needs to get a spanking; generally a positive command in good earnest will bring him to an understanding.

I also know an instance, for example, where corporal punishment did more harm than good; that it did no good to the boy whose back the teacher scored with blisters and stripes, and it did no good to the teacher—and this, perchance, were timely warning to others—for my granduncle very fairly mopped the schoolhouse floor with him. So much for the question of harm and good known to the experience of the writer.

Is the parent less beloved, in after years, who administers corporal punishment in a conscientious manner? As the question of conscientiousness of a hypothetical parent is so subtle and the temperament of this child, or that,