

# The Educational Weekly.

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WE must pause for a while in the discussion of the working of our education system as affected by legislation, to consider things of much more importance to the school-room. Defective as our school system is, and crying out for remedy so loudly as do some of its deficiencies, it is, in its massive whole, the best system in the world—the one that with help from the State, and direction and control, secures to the child the most thorough instruction, and to the teacher the most ample liberty and protection, and to the parent the surest guarantee that the mental and moral training of his children are entrusted to competent persons—all this at the smallest possible cost to all concerned. In criticizing our system, as we shall often be found doing, we should like always to be understood as being ready first to defend it from any unjust attack.

SCHOOL discipline and school punishments are what we shall treat of to-day, especially the latter. Without punishment of some sort discipline is impossible. Despite all that theorists may say to the contrary, there is enough of evil in every child to necessitate his punishment, more or less frequently. And without discipline, as perfect as may be, the school by so much is destitute of that formative influence by which growth of character becomes possible. The essence of good conduct is, that it shall spring from within, and not be imposed from without. But the habit of orderly behavior which school discipline implies, accustoms the mind to look upon its orderly environment as good and right, and so strengthens the child's tendencies towards good conduct and represses his tendencies towards bad conduct, and hence develops a moral bias, which in time strengthens the good principles which the child innately possesses. Discipline then re-acts on character, and character as it develops, makes discipline less and less irksome, and voluntarily puts conduct more and more in harmony with an environment of order.

WE shall not now enquire what good discipline is. That is a question to which many answers have been given, and upon which we have some very definite views which we shall sometime present. But every teacher has his own ideal of discipline. He has, or ought to have, some standard excellence of order to which he wishes the actions of his pupils to conform. This standard should be wisely chosen, and the higher and the nobler is the teacher's conception of his office, the more attention will

he bestow upon his standard of order, and the more surely will he base it upon a foundation of love, and fashion it in accordance with a wise knowledge of child-nature. The standard of discipline chosen marks the character of the teacher.

WHATEVER be the standard of order chosen there will be many violations of it, and these constitute the disorder of the school. Misconduct must be met by punishment—not always severe—not always of the same kind—but *always* by punishment; this is the law of nature. But in nature—in blind, unthinking, unloving nature—punishment is simply retributive; in human action, where the law of love prevails, its principal function is remedial; and so the efficiency of punishment consists in its being mainly corrective and exemplary. In human society this basic character of punishment must not be lost sight of. A forgiven wrongdoer is sometimes permanently corrected of his wrongdoing. But the example of his unpunished act may provoke others to transgression, or at least it may not deter them from transgression when on the point of entering upon it. So clemency is often mis-bestowed. Hence the teacher, as well as every governor, must remember that to prevent wrongdoing in others, the defaulter must not be allowed to go scot-free.

THIS consideration of the necessary sequence of punishment upon wrongdoing permits us to see very clearly how indispensable it is that a teacher's standard of order be chosen with a due regard for the conditions of child-nature, and be based on love. Else the teacher's rule would be a terrible despotism to which no parent should subject his child. But going on, and examining the character of punishment, it must not be thought that it is to be always severe. Its three characteristics must always be present. (1) It must be retributive, *i.e.*, it must be as certain as nature's inflictions for violated law. If a child persists in putting his finger in the flame of a candle, every time it does so it experiences pain. Nature invariably retributes an offence. (2) It must be corrective. The erring child must feel in the punishment the influence of love—that principle which distinguishes human law from every other, whether of the animate or inanimate world. (3) It must be exemplary. Society, whether of men or children, must feel both that punishment follows wrongdoing as certainly as re-action follows action in the physical world, and that the tendency of punishment is also to put the wrongdoer upon the right track, to correct his evil habits, to eradicate his vicious principles, to substitute better motives of action for

those that are base. As long as these three characteristics are present punishment may infinitely vary. Its severity should, as a rule, be proportioned to the gravity of the wrong done, but harsh it may rarely be; cruel, never.

NO question respecting school discipline has been more debated than the necessity and value of corporal punishment. The severe, and one may say the brutal, abuse of it in days gone by, brought on it such public opprobrium that to inflict it has been stigmatized as a wicked use of unlawful power. It has been prohibited in many states and nations, notably in France. The truth seems to be, that like every sort of punishment, it is in itself an evil, an imposition of pain, a violation of individual liberty; no sort of punishment is free from these maleficent characteristics—they are of the essence of punishment; but punishment is not necessarily wrong on that account. The only valid objections to corporal punishment are (1), it is extremely liable to abuse; and (2) it can rarely be inflicted without arousing in both the administrator of it and the culprit the baser animal passions, thus rendering nugatory the influence of love, or that which secures the correction of the wrongdoing in supplanting base motives by noble ones. Corporal punishment should be confined to young children, whose immature minds and restricted experiences do not permit the effective operation of other punishments which derive their efficacy by appealing to the self-respect, the sense of shame, the regard for the opinion of one's fellows, and the value put on personal liberty, which are developed only when a certain maturity of age and experience is reached. Dr. Arnold, whose system of government was based upon the implanting of principles so that conduct should be regulated thereby, retained corporal punishment "on principle, as fitly answering to, and marking the inferior state of boyhood." But so soon as that state is reached in which principles can be appealed to, and those powerful feelings enumerated above, corporal punishment should be abandoned, and it was Dr. Arnold's custom then to abandon it.

WHEN the teacher possesses that self-control which is essential to good government, and uses such methods of teaching as are natural and in harmony with child-nature, there will be little need of severe punishment, since there will be very few infractions of the standard of order more grave than mere temporary ebullitions of youthful spirit.