

## \* Special Papers. \*

## \*PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS.

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THE more we ponder on the question of Discipline in its various phases the more apparent becomes the fact that principles which guide us in our treatment of children at school ought as stringently to control home government. Our mode of management at school must depend largely upon the mode of home government. The two are inseparable: hence my subject should be entitled "Punishment in the Home and the School."

The objects of all punishment are primarily, the correction of the offender; secondarily, the prevention of offences by others. Were these objects made the ruling incentive with the teacher or parent about to impose a penalty, the form assumed by the penalty would never, as too often at present, be merely the escape valve for the angry passions. It would then become adapted to circumstances; it would be so framed and so applied that the child's evil spirit would be checked instead of his temper being roused or his sense of injury quickened. How frequently we hear such remarks as: "He made me so angry that I punished him severely." Because he is angry he acts, not because he intends to do the child good. The only valid reason for inflicting punishment is, *because it was conscientiously believed to be necessary for the child's good; because not to punish would be an injury to him.*

Our first aim should be to minimize all necessity for punishment. In order to effect this it is necessary to cultivate a *knowledge* of right and wrong, not simply to tell but to *teach* that certain acts are wrong. Cicero says: "No man can be really *honest* unless he is really *wise* (i.e., no man can do what is right unless he *knows* what is right)." Children should also have inculcated in their natures a spirit of kindness, and a proper regard for the rights and happiness of others. This should always be insisted upon in their intercourse with one another. A watchful eye will foresee difficulties and by judicious management harm will be averted, and the necessity of a penalty avoided. We should at all times have a knowledge of what is going on in the playground as well as indoors. I believe a large proportion of those upon whom devolves the responsibility of caring for the rising generation never appeal to the children's better judgment in dealing with their conduct. Their discipline assumes wholly the nature of correctives instead of that of preventives and guides. Ordinarily they pay no attention whatever to the doings of those in their charge. So long as there is not absolute rebellion in the camp all moves on in harmonious confusion. But when the worst comes to the worst there is suddenly formed a resolution to bring about a complete reformation. Henceforth and forever they must be taught to "toe the mark." Sleeves are tucked up and a hurricane rages, probably for an entire day. Even then there is not

a passing thought given to the cause of the difficulties; no regard paid to the intentions of the little evil-doers. No, no. The first, the last and the only law is: "I am out of temper hence you suffer." In such cases punishments are not applied for the true object,—the correction of the offender," but merely to gratify anger.

Again, others are constantly treading on the heels of the little ones; constantly performing the duties pertaining to generalship, with stentorian voice shouting "halt," "march, right-about face." These are often compelled to exclaim in desperation, "Alas! poor me! I am blessed with such horrible youngsters; I do nothing but scold and punish all the long, long day, yet it doesn't seem to do a bit of good." Likely not. My advice would be to spend a portion of your time singing the "Doxology." You will enjoy it quite as well, and the children will enjoy it vastly better. A teacher or parent should not be the only head a child has. He should have one of his own, and should be trained to use it. It is quite possible to discipline a child to death. He is allowed to do absolutely nothing unless directed by the other head, and if he ventures upon anything unbidden it is "whack" followed by earache. He becomes a mental nobody and will grow up either a social nobody or a criminal. It is of the most vital importance that a child be able independently to decide between right and wrong, as well as be in possession of the necessary will power to enable him to act upon his decisions. Independence of spirit and self-reliance are largely the products of cultivation. God forbid that we should by our mistaken methods so deprive a child of the training necessary for the acquisition of these qualities, that when he arrives at the age of manhood he will be pitilessly torn from the dictator that has become a necessary part of his being, and thrust unprotected and helpless into the world's strifes and temptations. Give your boy liberty. Do not hamper his freedom with countless rules, only watch over him with a readiness to check him when he is seen to be about to turn down a wrong path, and before he has had time to enter upon it.

Before inflicting any punishment, it is necessary that the strictest precaution be exercised in determining the guilt of the child. The chain of circumstantial evidence frequently entangles the innocent, and an accomplice will sometimes sacrifice a bosom friend to increase the chances of his own escape. Undue haste in assuming the guilt of a child is often a fatal error. How can the teacher, at the termination of his day's toil, with light heart and beaming countenance cheerfully repair to his home, with a consciousness of having that day in some wise unjustly punished the innocent? How can the parent at night close his eyes to rest with undisturbed peace of mind, if conscious of having cruelly punished the innocent? Think of the humiliation inflicted upon the child; think of his injured self-respect. It is certain that a child is peculiarly quick to recognize and to resent injustice, and equally certain that he will be morally injured by it. It is a fact that there exists between the teaching profession and the outside world a

chasm, created no doubt in some measure by a former professional stiffness, but to a greater extent by the recollection of earlier forms of cruelty to innocents. Many cherish for the profession a hatred which is the outcome of a sense of insult or injury in youth. In the otherwise peaceful breast there glows a spark of resentment which a touch of memory's torch at contact with a live present-day teacher fans into a flame of dislike. This in its turn finds expression in such terms as "tyrant," "old fogey," "crank," etc., etc. In consequence of unjust penalties and undue severity, pupils come to regard their teachers as unavoidable enemies and necessary evils. With a decline of the "Reign of Terror" in the school room will come a decline in the spirit of antagonism towards the profession.

Since the primary object of punishment is the correction of the child, the correct form is the mildest that will effect the desired result. It would be a positive injustice and consequently an injury to inflict a severe punishment where a mild one would suffice. Hence it becomes imperative for us to study the various natures of the children under our care, that we may be able to decide upon the mode of treatment adapted to each. A child is the hardest thing to understand, but unless we do understand something of child nature, we can never govern it properly. For instance, one child is exceedingly sensitive, and is so fortunate as to receive kind and sympathetic home treatment; even the teacher's reproving glance, or warning shake of the head, pierces its tender heart like a dagger. It would be cruel as well as injudicious to be severe with such a child. But there is another of determined, rugged nature, accustomed to rough home treatment, to whom the milder mode of correction would appear comically amusing. Something more convincing is wanted there. In the Book of books we read:—"Reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool." The severity of the penalty, then, should depend upon the spirit and temperament of the child as much as upon the seriousness of the offence.

Again, the motives which prompt a child to action, are not always what the acts themselves would indicate. He may have malice in his heart, and may plot revenge, but through imperfect plans or inability in executing them, they prove to be a benefit to the intended victim. On the other hand, he may intend to do another a kindness, but through lack of judgment or unforeseen interference, his well-meant act ends disastrously. If his motive be malice, he should be treated for malice; if kindness, he deserves credit for it, irrespective of results. This method, however, may furnish ground for a charge of partiality. The fond parent with a knowledge of the nature of the offence, and with the child's description of the punishment, becomes strikingly philosophical. He soon has arrived at the logical conclusion that neighbor Goodfellow's boy had been guilty of a serious offence, and had received mild treatment, whilst his own son Grit met with a more stern rebuke for a comparatively trifling breach of right, therefore it must be patent to every intelligent person, that the spirit of favoritism

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