

would be possible to devise any mode of punishing school children at once more fatuous, more pernicious, or more opposed to every principle of science and morality, than are the modes which are now most generally in vogue. Consider for a moment the practice of giving "impositions." It is not supposed that copying out a stated number of lines is an economical way of gaining information, so that even the plea of imparting instruction cannot be advanced as a benefit to compensate the evil of the method. And this evil is a very serious one. The object of all our methods in education ought to be, as much as possible, to economise effort; the mental energies ought, as it were, to be nursed, so that by their exercise they should lay up the largest possible store of information. But the mental energy which is expended in writing out an imposition is wholly, or almost wholly, profitless; and the amount of energy so expended is considerable—especially in the case of long impositions. For the whole punishment of writing out an imposition consists in the *tediousness* of the process; and tediousness, by the painful class of emotions which it arouses, is the most wearisome or exhausting of the influences that consume the nervous energies. It may therefore be said that in whatever degree the writing of an imposition is a punishment, in that degree are the nervous energies dissipated in a wholly useless manner. Therefore, to say nothing of the actual time that is wasted in the writing of impositions, or of the slovenly style of handwriting which this mode of punishment induces, my great objection to the mode of punishment is that, by consuming the nervous energies in a wholly profitless manner, it stands in direct antagonism with all the principles that I am endeavouring to inculcate. And still more foolishly wrong does this method of punishment become when

it is united, as it generally is, with another and still more objectionable method—I mean the custom of imprisoning children during playtime with the express purpose of denying them healthful recreation. To shut up a child already weary with work in an empty school-room under a depressing sense of disgrace, is something worse than cruel; to a child it is a wrongful injury that does not admit of being justified by any argument; and, in running counter to all the principles both of physiology and of education, it is a sin against society. In most cases the time during which a child is thus confined is the only time in the twenty-four hours that there is an opportunity afforded for any recreation at all; so that, when the weary time of solitude is over and school again meets, the unfortunate victim resumes work with energies doubly exhausted. Even if a child had the stamina of a man, it would be impossible that mental work resumed under such circumstances could be profitable—the faculty of memory being quickly affected by mental fatigue. But, as a matter of fact, owing to the great rapidity of physiological changes in a growing organism, a child has much more need of frequent exercise than has an adult; so that, whether we look at the matter from a sanitary or from an educational point of view, I think it is impossible too strongly to condemn the practice of confining school-children during playtime.

Of course I shall be asked what modes of punishment I would suggest as substitutes for the two which I have thus so strongly condemned. This question, however, I am not careful to answer. Even if it is true that there is a difficulty in providing other and efficient modes of punishment, I should not feel the difficulty to justify the maintenance of modes that are so clearly injurious. But, merely for the sake of giving an answer, I may