

LEFT-HANDEDNESS—A HINT FOR EDUCATORS.

DR. DANIEL WILSON, President of the Royal Society of Canada, has lately contributed a paper to the Proceedings of that society on the subject of left-handedness, to which he has managed to give an unexpected and very practical interest, affecting all who have children or who are concerned in their education. The author had written previously on this subject, but not with such full and effective treatment. He reviews the various causes to which the general preference of the right hand has been ascribed, and also those to which the occasional cases of left-handedness are attributed, and finds them mostly unsatisfactory. He shows clearly that the preferential use of the right hand is not to be ascribed entirely to early training. On the contrary, in many instances, where parents have tied up the left hand of a child to overcome the persistent preference for its use, the attempt has proved futile. He concludes that the general practice is probably due to the superior development of the left lobe of the brain, which, as is well known, is connected with the right side of the body. This view, as he shows, was originally suggested by the eminent anatomist, Professor Gratiolet. The author adopts and maintains it with much force, and adds the correlative view that "left-handedness is due to an exceptional development of the right hemisphere of the brain."

A careful review of the evidence gives strong reason for believing that what is now the cause of the preference for the right hand was originally an effect. Neither the apes nor any others of the lower animals show a similar inclination for the special use of the right limbs. It is a purely human attribute, and probably arose

gradually from the use, by the earliest race of men, of the right arm in fighting, while the left arm was reserved to cover the left side of the body, where wounds, as their experience showed, were most dangerous. Those who neglected this precaution would be most likely to be killed; and hence, in the lapse of time, the natural survival would make the human race, in general, "right-handed," with occasional reversions, of course, by "atavism," to the left-handed, or, more properly, the ambidextrous condition. The more frequent and energetic use of the right limb would, of course, react upon the brain, and bring about the excessive development of the left lobe, such as now generally obtains.

The conclusions from this course of reasoning are very important. Through the effect of the irregular and abnormal development which has descended to us from our belligerent ancestors, one lobe of our brains and one side of our bodies are left in a neglected and weakened condition. The evidence which Dr. Wilson produces of the injury resulting from this cause is very striking. In the majority of cases the defect, though it cannot be wholly overcome, may be in great part cured by early training, which will strengthen at once both body and mind. "Whenever," he writes, "the early and persistent cultivation of the full use of both hands has been accomplished, the result is greater efficiency, without any corresponding awkwardness or defect. In certain arts and professions, both hands are necessarily called into play. The skilful surgeon finds an enormous advantage in being able to transfer his instrument from one hand to the other. The dentist has to multiply instruments to