

# The Western School Journal

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## Editorial

### Love or Fear

In every printing office there is a pigeon-hole marked "Fillers." When a page is a little short in reading matter, a few lines, picked up almost at random, are inserted to fill the space. Sometimes, as in last issue of this Journal, the selection is not quite a happy one. At first the editor confesses to have felt no little shock on reading the story of the little girl who confused the blacksmith with the devil. The story seemed neither pointed nor funny—indeed, cheap and perhaps a little irreverent. Yet it is not altogether unfortunate it was printed, for it gives point to a discussion that arose recently in this city regarding corporal punishment in the schools.

It was urged by a preacher that such punishment makes for brutality and that it paves the way for the alleged brutality in prisons and penitentiaries. Now, it is very clear that anyone attempting to draw a conclusion should be sure of his premises. In this case the preacher should have taken good care to find out how common corporal punishment is in the schools, and how it is administered. Unfortunately he seems to have overlooked this essential. As a matter of fact, the practice of whipping has been almost eliminated. The schools do not resemble in this respect the schools of twenty years ago. The controlling force today in the great majority of schools is love and not fear. Teachers are regarded by the children as friends and companions. Going to school is a real pleasure. In comparatively few schools does terrorism exist. The rod is no longer the general symbol of authority.

But how is it outside of schools? How about the church, the Sunday School, the home? This is where the story of the little girl comes in. How did she get such a conception of hell and of the devil and by implication of God? Surely there is yet in current theology a little of the old terrorism of our boyhood. The devil of the little girl is just the same devil we knew so many years ago, and we hold that it was devilish in the extreme for preachers and teachers in home or Sunday School to present such a monstrosity to children. Of course the teaching of today in theological circles is very generally different, and it would be unfair to judge all by the answer of a single child. We take it for granted that the preacher who began the discussion would not care to be held responsible for the teachings of twenty-five years ago on this very matter of punishment.

Passing on from this to a larger question, it is only right to point out that even if corporal punishment, though rarely administered, is still objectionable, it is very far from being morally and socially as damaging as other forms of punishment that are yet far from obsolete. As a boy, I should prefer a good strapping to everlasting scolding, open reproof, and caustic criticism. One can strap a child and yet remain a gentleman, but no gentleman can afford to be ungentlemanly, rude, and offensive. How should it be put if instead of gentleman we write lady?

On the general principle of punishment probably the preacher is not far astray. Every time a negative incentive is used instead of a positive, or an artificial incentive instead of a natural,