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## EDITORIAL.

The paper on "Discipline" read at the last meeting of the Association and the subsequent discussion, which will be found in this number, give the present status of opinion on this subject among the profession in America.

While corporal punishment is not favored, yet it is held to be permissible and necessary in some cases as a last resort. The present state of opinion in general on this subject is, no doubt, a reaction from the excessive practices of our fore-fathers. And, perhaps, in our reaction we have gone too far, and the proper position is a more median one. It is by no means certain that the infliction of a certain amount of physical pain is harmful. No doubt, physical pain has been the greatest educational force in the development of the race, and its entire elimination now may be detrimental to the best health and vigor of the growing generation. More certainly, if the child recapitu-

lates the history of the race.

While this probably is true in general terms, yet, when applied to the training of the psycho-asthenic many restrictions must, from the nature of the case, arise.

The theory of punishment, as applied to the psycho-asthenic, is educative as distinguished from the preventive or deterrent and the retributive. Certain habits and lines of action must be eliminated and certain modes of behavior taught. He must learn that some actions earn disagreeable consequences and others agreeable consequences. In other words, he must be supplied with motives for the proper behavior. Just what will be regarded as disagreeable consequences depends on the child and can only be discovered by study of the individual child. The great differences of mental capacity produce great variety here. What will be successful with one child will very often be of no value with another. The business of the disciplinarian is to search for these means of mental restraint and success here lies chiefly in his ingenuity. And what appear to us as silly and indifferent actions are often of the most value for they restrain the child and the end is gained.

But where ordinary means fail and corporal punishment is suggested, the first thing to be considered is, will it restrain. Very frequently, it will not. But where the means already indicated fail, and it is shown that corporal punishment will restrain, there may be not only a place for it but full duty will not be done to the child or his mates if it is omitted.

In all discussions on discipline, corporal punishment receives more attention than it deserves because of its rarity. The mere statement that corporal punishment is permissible, often carries the impression that it is a common and ordinary mode of discipline; whereas the very reverse is true in all well regulated institutions for feeble-minded. In a population of one thousand it will not occur, on an average, more often than once or twice in three years, and then only among those who approach more nearly the criminal type than the psycho-asthenic,—the moral imbeciles. And it is the lack of knowledge of this type, as well as the lack of appreciation of the great variation in mental ability of the feeble-minded, which lays open to criticism, on the part of the general public, all discussion of this subject.

**A Visit to the School for Defectives at Rome, Italy.**—The first school at Rome for the education of imbecile children was founded on the Janiculum in 1884 by the Senator Tommasini, Nincenzo. In 1897 Professor Bonfigli called the attention of the Chamber of Deputies to the necessity of taking steps to get rid of the inferior position of Italy compared with other civilized nations in the care of the feeble-minded; but, in a country so heavily burdened as Italy, it is scarcely to be wondered that the Chamber was not ready to make this a permanent charge upon the public treasury, seeing that it has not yet become so in Great Britain. Next year Professor Bonfigli founded the League for the Protection of Deficient Children and the cause found an eloquent advocate in Doctress Montessori, who went through the principal towns of Italy, kindling enthusiasm everywhere and starting local committees. In