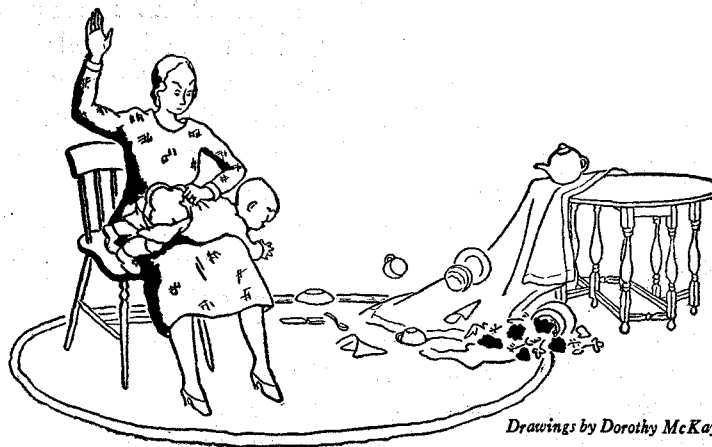


# Spank It Out!



by **GARRY CLEVELAND MYERS**

**A**SK THE MAN in the street what a child psychologist is and he will tell you that a child psychologist is an expert who believes in letting children do as they please. This false conception has been created by a small group of writers who are not themselves psychologists. Just as workers of the country were once led to identify the Grand Old Party with "the full dinner pail," so parents have come to associate all forms of corporal punishment with "barbarism" and "brutality." They are convinced that "the scientific rearing of children" forbids spanking. "The psychologist has settled the whole question," they say.

Now what are the facts to support this generally accepted conclusion? The one simple fact is that there are no such facts. No one has ever proved scientifically either that the baby should be spanked or that he shouldn't. A few have offered their opinions — nothing more — and that is all that I shall attempt to offer.

The difference between a child's destroying the neighbor's flowers at the age of four and his robbing a gas station at twenty is only a matter of degree. While Mr. Wickersham is looking for the basic causes of increasing crime, he would do well to observe the general breakdown of parental authority in the American home. This breakdown is typified by two types of mothers — the pathetic and the futile. The pathetic mother is too frail or too cowardly to

make her little children obey her commands; she wears herself out attempting to live with her own offspring who have never recognized authority in her.

The futile mother, usually one of the intelligentsia, gives herself so completely to her club, her social duties, or some new movement for vast civic reform that she has no time left for the education of her children. The result is the same in both cases, and the alarming increase in crime among adolescents is a natural consequence of our folly in abandoning the older American tradition of subjecting children to reasonable restraints in the home.

God pity the child who has not learned the meaning of "No" before his third birthday! His life will not be safe, he will be dangerous to property, and he will jeopardize the rights of others. He has already spent three years of elementary training in crime. Happiness is not for him, nor for those who love him, for they will have to spend anxious hours protecting him and protecting other persons from him.

If such a child learns the meaning of "No" in later life, it can only be at a tremendous cost. A court of justice and a penal institution may be required to give him lessons, and he may be forced to pay for these lessons with his life. Meanwhile many other people will have suffered from his failure to comprehend the vital importance of this one monosyllable.

# DON'T SPARE THE ROD

I HAVE NO quarrel with any mother who can succeed, without inflicting pain, in teaching her child at an early age to avoid specific dangers which have been defined, to handle property with reasonable care, and to consider the feelings and rights of others. Hats off to her! A skillful mother may even accomplish these ends without ever having to use the warning negative, but she will have to be with the child during nearly all his waking moments. Such constant care is good neither for her nor for him. Those who advise parents not to inflict bodily pain upon children also advise them to make their sons and daughters independent. Yet how can independence be promoted by continuous supervision? These two counsels are mutually contradictory.

The advantages of giving children early lessons in restraint are too obvious to call for enumeration here. For one thing, the child acquires some basic safety habits. Although one can never be quite sure that one's children will avoid known dangers, the chances are heavily in favor of the child who has early developed certain very definite inhibitions. Every year hundreds of children are run over by automobiles, and hundreds more are burned to death. They have not been properly taught to avoid these dangers. True, almost all children are told not to play in the streets and not to meddle with fire, but the telling rarely penetrates into their nervous systems.

How can we make our repeated warnings to the very young become a part of their innermost being? I regard this as the fundamental problem in child training, and I believe that the best answer is a good, old-fashioned spanking. The punishment should be administered vigorously enough to make it hurt, so that the child will not be likely to repeat his undesirable act. If spanking is applied intelligently, no other kind of corporal punishment will ever be necessary.

The most effective spank is that of the bare hand upon the bare, fat thighs — the barer the better. Of course, no thinking parent will employ a shoe or a hairbrush; nor will he strike the child about the face and head, or shake him. Some prefer to use a switch, which is effective enough and causes pain; but when you need it, you may have to look all over the

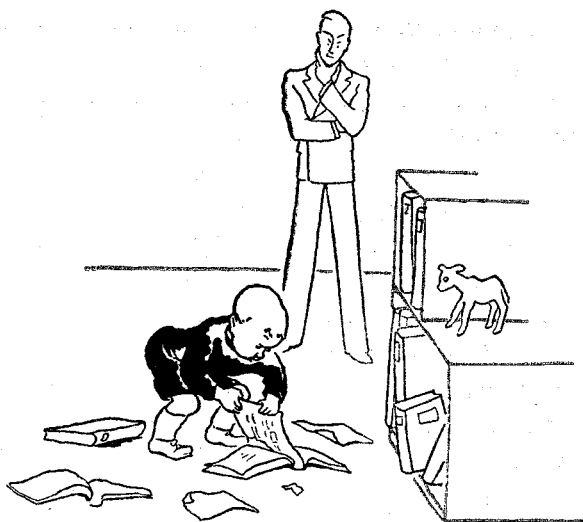
house to find it. Your palms, however, like the poor, you have always with you.

My belief in early corporal punishment is not merely theoretical. Mrs. Myers and I spanked our three children occasionally before they were old enough to go to kindergarten. We did it very deliberately. Before the first child was able to climb up and seize things which he should not have, we sat down together and worked out a program. We selected a few things — just a few — which he was to be taught to avoid. We planned always to have a number of toys near when he was likely to do the forbidden thing, and to have ready some suggestion for play to which he could turn after he was spanked.

Eventually a sort of code was outlined, to which we both agreed. In punishing the baby we were to accept equal responsibility — that is, the one nearest him would administer the pain at once when he ventured to do any of the few forbidden things which we had specified. The spanking was to be administered as mechanically as possible, and we were never to caress the child immediately afterward; we were to act as if nothing unusual had happened. We agreed that he should receive immediate pain the first time he broke the law which we had imposed, and every time thereafter until he stopped breaking it; that there should never be an exception to this rule; and that we would say "No" just once during the spanking. We also decided that we would not inflict this punishment in any situations other than those we had settled upon.

In laying down this plan we had in mind only one purpose — to establish in the child's nervous system an immediate connection between the forbidden object or activity and the pain he received from the spanking. We reasoned that if we could make these forbidden things distasteful enough to the child while we were with him, he would avoid them permanently even in our absence. And it worked beautifully. We were surprised to discover that very few spankings were necessary to get results. Very soon a mere "No" (without spanking) made the child avoid new forbidden things.

In general, we had very much the same experience with the next two children. They all learned very early to avoid a few specific dangers, and they learned it at small cost both to them and to us. They also learned to accept



"No" as final without emotional outbursts, and all of this training has proved very valuable since. So far as we are able to discern, these three children have not suffered from repression. Except for one or two temporary explosions lasting less than half a minute, none of them has had tantrums.

#### THE SYSTEM JUSTIFIED

**T**HIS SYSTEMATIC development of a few specific inhibitions in our children during their first years justified itself almost immediately. By the time they were four years old, we were able to abandon spanking entirely; after that we substituted sitting on a chair for a definite period of time whenever punishment was necessary. Thus by saying "No" and by giving each child a few spankings to prove that we meant it, we have been spared many of the annoyances which parents often prepare for themselves. We have never been so plagued and tormented by a spoiled child that we could not be reasonably affectionate. Moreover, we have been able to save our tongues. Perhaps one of the strongest arguments for intelligent spanking is the protection that it affords the youngster against verbal lashings by his parents. The child who very early accepts an unrepeatable "No" as final does not have to be nagged and scolded.

Once a child has mastered the alphabet of self-control, boundless opportunities are opened up for parents to read to him and play with him, to wander with him in his land of make-believe, to listen to his fanciful yarns, to answer all his questions, to stimulate him to invent and create, and to encourage him to

mingle happily with other children of his age.

At this point some indignant reader may ask, "But weren't you ashamed to hurt a helpless babe?" Our answer is that we were not. We should certainly be ashamed to hurt a child just to make us feel more comfortable for the moment. That would be cruelty indeed. Perhaps ninety per cent of all punishments are administered for no other reason, and this has brought spanking into disrepute. We really need a new name for punishment; the word now carries with it an unsavory meaning.



Many still regard it as a form of retribution and revenge. It ought to mean a kind of psychological deterrent.

One should also remember that punishment only prevents—it does not teach. Parents often forget this fact. Animal trainers, on the other hand, do not. They never employ pain to teach a seal to toss a ball. Nor should a mother spank a child to force him to pick up his blocks, for this will establish a wrong connection in his nervous system; it will identify suffering with good behavior, while the object of right training is to identify suffering with bad actions. If you wish a child under three years of age to come in happily from his play, to go to bed good-naturedly, or to go to the bathroom without resistance, the proper course is to reason with him. In such situations the parent must learn the power of tactful suggestion.

#### AUTOMATIC INHIBITIONS

**I**N SHORT, don't give positive commands to young children. Give negative commands only, and very few of them. Tell the child not to meddle with known dangers, not to destroy property, not to annoy other people, and when he threatens to do any of these things, let

"No" mean instant inhibition. If this warning is not enough, then a spanking is in order. Common sense and everyday experience indicate that we can very quickly teach a child of one or two, just as we teach a puppy, to avoid certain objects and activities if, always and immediately, the child experiences pain every time he commits the forbidden act.

And don't worry because the child may not always see *why*. Let him learn to avoid certain things long before he is able to understand the reason for avoidance. After he has come to respond to your negative command, then you can explain and reason as much as you like. In other words, give him habit patterns first and reason afterward.

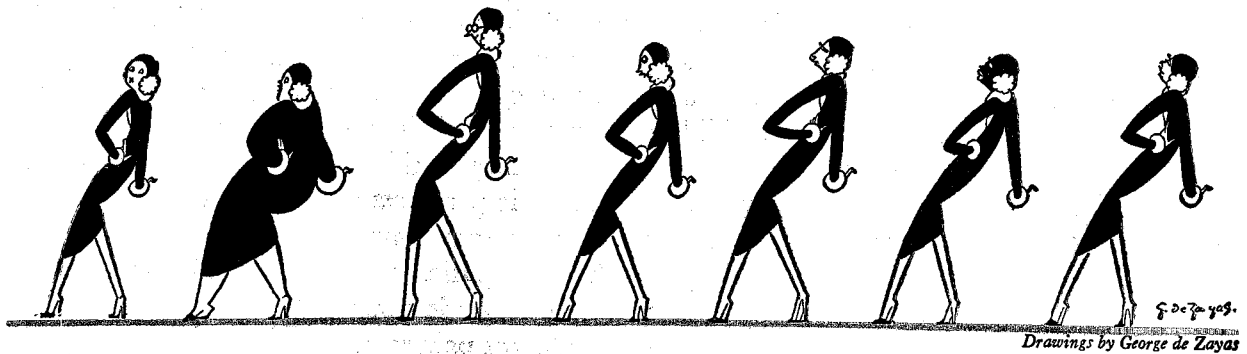
If you would make spanking an effective instrument in the education of the child, center your attention upon one thing at a time. Ignore all other things, except to keep them out of the child's way. Always be present when he is exposed to the particular dangers you have selected to work upon. Then give him the opportunity of making his own choice with reference to it. Your primary object is not to

shield him from temptation, but to build up his resistance to it. Therefore, when he is confronted by a dangerous thing, don't be too quick to pull him away from it. That would save him just this once, but if you want him to avoid it permanently, you will have to create in his nervous system a permanent and painful association with the forbidden object. If he disregards your warning, spank him, and make the pain so automatic that it will seem as if the dangerous object itself had inflicted it. Before long the word "No" will be enough in itself to deter the child, not only from this one object, but from new situations as they arise.

Once the child has learned the meaning of "No," he should hear it very rarely. Each day I grow in my conviction that every child should learn very early that there are some things he must not have and some things he must not do; that fundamental inhibitions are acquired most easily before the child is three years old; and that the most practical and common sense means of teaching these basic lessons is the good, old-fashioned spank.







# Parade of Wooden Women

by **RUTH BROWN REED**

**A**LMOST ANY woman would wax wrathful if you accused her personally of being a mere rubber-stamp creature. If she is the average innocent consumer, she is probably not aware of the degree to which standardized styles have molded her into a like kind. She does not know what goes on behind the scenes of the shops she frequents. She does not realize what a nice little mouse she is, or how she scurries with thousands of her little sister mice to the tune of a new Pied Piper that has sprung into being within the last five years. *She*, of course, is individual.

But the question is — can any woman be individual under the present system of forced standardization of “styling”? Can she be anything but commonplace? Take the largest metropolis in the world for your hunting ground, and see what the New York shops have to offer. Ask to see anything that is not a standardized fashion, that a certain group of “stylists” or manufacturers have not agreed is the smart or the correct thing. You will have a nice, long, discouraging shopping jaunt ahead of you. You will go home weary and empty-handed — unless you change your mind and buy what a great, coördinated, retail and wholesale group has decided to let you wear.

“Stylists?” you say. Yes, stylists and “fashion clinics.” No one ever heard of them until recently, but now they are the common language of wholesale and retail circles. The last five years have witnessed a great machinery

set up to standardize style and clothes, and these new words have sprung up to define the process.

But we are getting way ahead of our story. Let us first walk into the shops from the outside. Let us save the dénouement until the end. And then, let us try to be individual — not highly so, but just enough to express ourselves and not look like everybody else.

## THE BLACK-GREEN-BROWN-WINE BLUES

**T**O BE PERSONAL for a moment. Last spring I bought a dark blue coat. I bought it early. It was an expensive copy of a Bruyère model, simple and military in line. Thousands of women who read this article will recognize the coat by this description. It was the first of its kind I had seen. It is neither here nor there that everywhere I went I ran into cheaper editions of the coat. I have walked down Fifth Avenue and on the same day counted anywhere from six to a dozen women with adaptations of the same coat. It became a sort of hilarious game with me — the peak of which was reached when the coat appeared in a Thirty-fourth Street window gayly flaunting a \$14.50 price mark.

I am digressing. The point is that last fall I still wanted to wear the coat. In spite of the cheap copies, mine was still a good-looking coat. I could not afford just to throw it away, so I decided to buy a new blue dress for it and make an all-blue ensemble for daytime wear.