

# **CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD**

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Children and childhood by N. Niemeyer

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**N. NIEMEYER**

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AND  
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BY  
N. NIEMEYER



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## PREFACE TO STUDENTS

STUDENTS of child study often have one great difficulty. It is, to see the subjects treated by Psychology, in the real gambols and sayings of living children. The difficulty has arisen partly because the earlier psychologists naturally studied mature minds, for they wished to see mental life in its completer forms; and so there were comparatively few studies made of children. But now, thanks to Professor Sully, M. Preyer, Professor Dewey, Professor Findlay, Mr. C. Burt, Dr. Freud, Dr. Montessori, and many other psychologists, teachers, and doctors, a solid body of knowledge about children has been created. We may reap two advantages. First, we can see perhaps more clearly than before which are the essential differences between a child and a full-grown person. Secondly, we must admit now that there are certain stages of growth, and certain tendencies at each stage, which are common to most children.

How can we arrange this knowledge so as to bring it closest to the children who sit in our classes, and shout and play outside? Perhaps by arranging the 'subjects' treated in Psychology books in connexion with the main stages of growth. For at certain times most of those main subjects are likely to become very marked. Thus we may keep closest to life; and to do so is the purpose of the arrangement of this book.

But two things must be remembered. The first is that the arrangement of subjects under ages does not mean that the subject belongs only to that age. To hold such an idea would disqualify any one for child study for ever after. Who could think that Imagination only belonged to children of 5-7 years



old? What the arrangement means is that during those years of life, Imagination is likely to be growing and exercising itself, and that it has then a peculiar relation to the rest of life. There is a second thing to be remembered. It is this : that a book of child study can only suggest the probable development of a particular child. For one child is forward, one backward, and all the others various in degrees past all counting.

A book such as this one is only half contained in its own pages. Side by side with it, in the reader's mind, there should walk the shape of some child whom the reader is trying to understand. Then the child will correct the book, with constant touches of contradiction and agreement. May the book help to interpret the child.

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