

# **THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BABY**

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The Biography of a Baby by Milicent Washburn Shinn

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**MILICENT WASHBURN SHINN**

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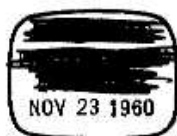


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# THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BABY

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## I

### BABY BIOGRAPHIES IN GENERAL

“It is a well recognized fact in the history of science that the very subjects which concern our dearest interests, which lie nearest our hearts, are exactly those which are the last to submit to scientific methods, to be reduced to scientific law. Thus it has come to pass that while babies are born and grow up in every household, and while the gradual unfolding of their faculties has been watched with the keenest interest and intensest joy by intelligent and even scientific fathers and mothers from time immemorial, yet very little has yet been done in the scientific study of this most important of all possible subjects,

## 2 THE BIOGRAPHY

— the ontogenetic evolution of the faculties of the human mind.

“ Only in the last few years has scientific attention been drawn to the subject at all. Its transcendent importance has already enlisted many observers, but on account of the great complexity of the phenomena, and still more the intrinsic difficulty of their interpretation, scientific progress has scarcely yet commenced.

“ What is wanted most of all in this, as in every science, is a *body of carefully observed facts*. But to be an accomplished investigator in this field requires a rare combination of qualities. There must be a wide intelligence combined with patience in observing and honesty in recording. There must be also an earnest scientific spirit, a loving sympathy with the subject of investigation, yet under watchful restraint, lest it cloud the judgment; keenness of intuitive perception, yet soberness of judgment in interpretation.”

I have appropriated these words of Dr.

Joseph Le Conte because the general reader is not likely to see them where they were originally printed, in a little university study, and it is a pity to let the general reader miss so good an introduction to the subject. Not all learned men rate baby biography as highly as Dr. Le Conte does; but probably all biologists do, and those psychologists who are most strongly impressed with the evolutionary interpretation of life.

It is easy to see why one's views of evolution affect the matter. In botany, for instance, we do not think that we can understand the mature plant by studying it alone, without knowledge of its germinating period. If we omitted all study of radicle and plumule and cotyledon, we should not only lose an interesting chapter from the science, but even the part we kept, the classification and morphology and physiology of the grown plant itself, would be seriously misunderstood in some ways. So in other sciences: it is necessary to understand how things came