

**CHILDREN'S WAYS; BEING
SELECTIONS FROM THE
AUTHOR'S
"STUDIES OF CHILDHOOD", WITH
SOME ADDITIONAL MATTER**

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Children's ways; being selections from the author's "Studies of childhood", with some additional matter by James Sully

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JAMES SULLY

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BEING SELECTIONS FROM THE AUTHOR'S
"STUDIES OF CHILDHOOD,"
WITH SOME ADDITIONAL MATTER

BY

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PREFACE.

THE kindly welcome accorded by the press to my volume *Studies of Childhood* has suggested to me that there was much in it which might be made attractive to a wider class of readers than that addressed in a psychological work. I have, accordingly, prepared the following selections, cutting out abstruse discussions, dropping as far as possible technical language, and adapting the style to the requirements of the general reader. In order to shorten the work the last two chapters—"Extracts from a Father's Diary" and "George Sand's Childhood"—have been omitted. The order of treatment has been altered somewhat, and a number of stories has been added. I hope that the result may succeed in recommending what has long been to myself one of the most delightful of subjects to many who would not be disposed to read a larger and more difficult work, and to draw on a few of these, at least, to a closer and more serious inspection of it.

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CHILDREN'S WAYS.

PART I.

AT PLAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE REALM OF FANCY.

ONE of the few things we seemed to be certain of with respect to child-nature was that it is fancy-full. Childhood, we all know, is the age for dreaming; for living a life of happy make-believe. Even here, however, we want more accurate observation. For one thing, the play of infantile imagination is probably much less uniform than is supposed. There seem to be very serious children who rarely, if ever, indulge in a wild fancy. Mr. Ruskin has recently told us that when a child he was incapable of acting a part or telling a tale, that he never knew a child "whose thirst for visible fact was at once so eager and so methodic".

One may, nevertheless, safely say that a large majority of the little people are, for a time at least, fancy-bound. A child that did not want to play and cared nothing for the marvels of storyland would

surely be regarded as queer and not just what a child ought to be.

Supposing that this is the correct view, there still remains the question whether children's imagination always plays in the same fashion. Now science is beginning to bring to light differences of childish fancy. For one thing it suggests that children have their favourite type of mental imagery, that one child's fancy may habitually move in a coloured world, another in a world of sounds, and so forth. The fascination of *Robinson Crusoe* to many a boy lies in the wealth of images of movement and adventure which it supplies.

With this difference in the material with which a child's fancy plays, there are other differences which turn on his temperament and predominant feelings. Hence, the familiar fact that in some children imagination broods by preference on gloomy and alarming objects, whereas in others it selects what is bright and gladsome.

Perhaps I have said enough to justify my plea for new observations and for a reconsideration of hasty theories in the light of these. Nor need we object to a fresh survey of what is perhaps the most delightful side of child-life.

(a) *The Transforming Wand.*

The play of young fancy meets us in the very domain of the senses: it is active, often bewilderingly active, when the small person seems busily engaged in looking at things and moving among them.

We see this fanciful "reading" of things when a

child calls the star an "eye," I suppose because of its brightness and its twinkling movement, or says that a dripping plant is "crying".

This transforming touch of the magic wand of young fancy has something of crude nature-poetry in it. This is abundantly illustrated in what may be called childish metaphors, by which they try to describe what is new and strange. For example, a little boy of nineteen months looking at his mother's spectacles said: "Little windows". Another boy two years and five months, on looking at the hammers of a piano which his mother was playing, called out: "There is owlegie" (diminutive of owl). His eye had instantly caught the similarity between the round felt disc of the hammer divided by a piece of wood, and the owl's face divided by its beak. In like manner another little boy called a small oscillating compass-needle a "bird" probably on the ground of its fluttering movement. Pretty conceits are often resorted to in this effort to get at home with strange objects, as when stars were described by one child as "cinders from God's stove," and butterflies as "pansies flying".

This play of imagination upon the world of sense has a strong vitalising or personifying element. A child is apt to attribute life and sensation to what we serious people regard as lifeless. Thus he gives not only a body but a soul to the wind when it whistles or howls at night. The most unpromising things come in for this warming, life-giving touch of a child's fancy. Thus one little fellow, aged one year eight months, conceived a special fondness for the letter W, addressing it thus: "Dear old boy W". Miss Ingelow tells