

**THE PHYSICAL NATURE
OF THE CHILD, AND
HOW TO STUDY IT**

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The physical nature of the child, and how to study it by Stuart H. Rowe

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BY

STUART H. ROWE, Ph.D.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES OF
EDUCATION, BROOKLYN TRAINING SCHOOL FOR TEACHERS,
NEW YORK; FORMERLY SUPERVISING PRINCIPAL OF
THE LOVELL SCHOOL DISTRICT, NEW HAVEN, CONN.,
AND LECTURER ON PEDAGOGY IN YALE UNI-
VERSITY; AUTHOR OF "THE LIGHTING
OF SCHOOL-ROOMS"

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PREFACE

IN so far as the teaching of to-day is superior to that of a generation ago, it owes that precedence largely to a more general observance of two fundamental principles. One of these is that action is the first law of growth; the other, that individuals vary enormously in their capabilities for different kinds of mental and physical action.

It is these two principles and the many implied by them that have called forth this book. In so far as action is to be secured from each child, the physical conditions and basis of that action should be known, not only for the average, but, according to our second principle, for *each* of the children. That conditions exist highly prejudicial to the child's physical development and, consequently, to his growth and power to act,

is evident from a glance at the ordinary school-room. That the causes of these obstructive circumstances are not to be stumbled upon without effort or care is equally evident. There are thousands of earnest teachers as well as parents who cannot witness the slow progress of a few children, the worn, tired faces of some, and the listless apathy of others in quiet. For such it is hoped the suggestions contained in this book may serve as a fairly complete and helpful guide to a study of the child's physical basis for action.

It is not expected that a teacher will make all the tests here suggested on every child in his room. No teacher will have time for that. But the tests may be made in a comparatively short time, and be of great helpfulness in solving some of the individual problems which present themselves to every teacher. In some cases the method of experiment admits of an application to all of the children in the room as easily as to one, and light is certain to be thrown on the power of individuals whose ability had been

previously over- or under-estimated. This light may be of avail to the teacher in leading him to a better adaptation of his work to the child, or it may lead to the removal of the cause of the abnormality, — in either case to the great advantage of both teacher and pupil. While tests of this sort increase the teacher's burden at the moment, they certainly relieve the nervous strain and worry coming upon him from the backward or troublesome pupil. If the child has become normal now that the hindrances have been removed, or if the teacher is now in a position to adapt himself to known peculiarities, — in either case the solution of the problem is complete. Work may still be involved, but not to the degree and not with the worry which otherwise would be unavoidable. Far be it from the intent of the author to hint that all the difficulties to be encountered by the teacher or parent are in the realm of the physical. The physical side of the child's nature is taken because it is get-at-able and is the source of a far larger amount of psychical deformity than is

usually admitted. Any child under question should be assumed to be weak or degenerating physically, until the investigation has falsified the assumption.

For parents whose time admits of a study of their children from the physical side, this book is intended to furnish the important data for such an investigation. It would seem that they would be among the first to interest themselves in such studies, though experience would hardly justify that opinion.

The term "practical" is always relative. Great care has been taken to include no tests which are not thoroughly practical, that is, well worth while.

The subjects treated with the tests suggested represent in part a course in child-study given by the author in the State Normal School at Mankato, Minnesota. This book was originally an attempt to supply a text-book which would make it possible to devote more of the time of that course to experimentation. Since then a change in position has led the author to see

more clearly the advantage of some such guide for teachers in a city system. A slight acquaintance with rural schools would lead one to the opinion that here first of all the suggestions of this book are needed.

An attempt has been made to exclude everything not directly helpful or suggestive in making the studies, compactness and freedom from inflation being regarded essential to the usefulness of the book. Where various methods of testing have been suggested, the practical and non-scientific is in each case recommended, though the possibilities of the situation will largely influence the choice of tests both as to number and kind.

The order of the chapters has been determined partly by their immediate importance to teachers and the relative degree of interest shown by students in the subjects treated. The last two chapters, however, have somewhat of the nature of a summary approaching the subject from the standpoint of hygiene particularly.