

EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Early childhood by Margaret McMillan

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MARGARET MCMILLAN

**EARLY
CHILDHOOD**



CHILDREN OF THE HOME.

ID. 5643941

EARLY CHILDHOOD

BY
MARGARET McMILLAN.

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WITH FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS.



LONDON:
SWAN SONNENSCHN & Co., LIMITED
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1900

LB 507

M33

DEDICATION.

TO

MR. MONTAGU BLATCHFORD, MR. ROBERT BLATCHFORD,
AND MR. ALEXANDER THOMPSON

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS INSCRIBED WITH MUCH ESTEEM.

P R E F A C E.

EVERYONE admits that we are living in an age of great social uneasiness.

From the dark places of cities come ominous sounds of Revolt—the Revolt of the disinherited, the despairing. In higher grades of Society revolt is more decorous, less noisy, and better organized. But it is still Revolt, the intelligent and order-loving artizan combines with his comrades—pays his Union money and regards the Trade-Union itself much as the patriot regards his country. It is something to defend, to fight for, and to trust in. A large section of literary middle-class people sympathize with the army of revolt. Opposite these is the hostile camp. Masters combined, surrounded by free-labour people, and sympathized with by philanthropists who are pained to think there are certain “dangerous classes” among the poor who cannot be reached by soup and blankets.

“No,” retorts a voice from the opposite side, “there are no dangerous classes among the poor. For the poor have to work hard and to fare scantily, and where the water runs fast there is little fear that it carries disease and death. *You* are the dangerous classes. *You* are the congested centres of Society through which the human life-blood creeps sluggishly. *You* sleep in sheltered places—where never a wind of anguish reaches you. *You* are dangerous.

Within the nation of troubled men and women there is another—of untroubled little children. Go into a public park on any fine morning and you may see the nursling of some wealthy home eyeing the child of poverty who gambols near him on the grass. Ah! If there was no stately nurse in attendance on the former how quickly those two little people would strike up an acquaintance and toddle off to play together.

They do not know as yet what a gulf yawns between them. But they feel that they have much in common, and that it would be delightful to be playfellows.

As yet neither has been baked—to use Carlyle's expression—into a shape which one can reasonably believe to be dangerous. The baby-eyes are still bright and pure as sunny water. The two children might toddle off together, giving each other a "butterfly kiss" with cool baby lips. How comes it that one or other is baked at last into a "dangerous" person? Why should either ever become dangerous? How do they drift so far apart that one cannot look at last into the eyes of the other without envy or distrust? There will always be "dangerous" classes until some such questions are asked, not only in slums and dark garrets, but in luxurious nurseries.

This little book deals with this question, for it deals with primary education. In one or two places—as in the Chapter on Moral Training—some allusion is made to older children. But the treatment of all questions relating to the education of older children is left to other pens. At the age of twelve or fourteen there may be, and must be indeed, a parting of the way. For then the child must begin to receive—not Technical training—but such instruction as will probably help him later when he makes choice of a career or trade. In this little volume the teaching of Science is not touched upon. Art teaching is dealt with only in so far as it concerns the efforts at self-expressions, and movements of young children. The book deals only with questions that concern the opening years of life—the years when impressions are received, when impulses are strengthened or curbed, when the sub-soil of the nature is made rich or barren, when "dangerous" elements strike deep root, or perish in obscurity.

In short, it deals simply and only with questions of *human* education, the education that must precede every kind of secondary, technical, and professional education whatsoever.