

**THE STUDY OF
CHILDREN AND THEIR
SCHOOL TRAINING**

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The study of children and their school training by Francis Warner

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BY

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PREFACE



THIS work is addressed chiefly to teachers, parents, and others in daily contact with children; but contains information that is likely to interest those engaged in directing education, philanthropy, and other forms of social work as well as those concerned with mental science.

The book has been written in the hope of aiding an advance in the care of children, and in the practice of educational methods, by promoting a more exact study and classification of the children to be cared for and trained; while giving an account of some conditions of childhood in its many varieties as seen from the standpoint of the observer who records what he sees as in other branches of physical science. For the purposes of observation, a clear account of the points to look at, what to look for, and what may be seen, normal or sub-normal, forms the alphabet of our subject.

Child study has of late years been actively carried on in America and in other countries. The psychological researches of many American, and some English and German inquirers, are well known, and give most inter-

esting records of the sayings and doings of young children, and their modes of thought and expression. In the psychological laboratory investigation has shown something of the laws of mental fatigue, and the reaction of the senses on the brain. The application of such knowledge, however, as well as the means of devising special methods in training needs, as a scientific basis, a fuller understanding of the groups of children to be educated, and the means of discriminating and describing them. Considerable differences are to be found among observers, both in the purpose of their studies, the points of view from which their work is undertaken, and the methods of procedure and description adopted.

Problems in child study may be looked at from different points of view; as mainly psychological, or as mainly physical questions, with the determination to follow the methods of observation, and the modes of description used in the conduct of biological study and the physical sciences; in the latter case it is important to describe phenomena by the use of terms indicating what we see and such as are employed in physical investigation. I think the best results will be obtained by keeping the two methods distinct, and suggest that in the scientific (physical) study of children in their modes of brain-action, and bodily conditions, we should describe what we see, and employ no terms implying results of consciousness and states of feeling. Child

study conducted by any method is advantageous as directing attention to the individual child; it increases knowledge of child life, and tends to cultivate a fellow-feeling with the child as an object of interest.

I shall here use points for observation which I began to study twenty years ago, indicating brain-power and mental expression, such as render it possible to give descriptions of children, as of other living things, by describing facts seen. The study of such observations shows many new relations among growth, movement, and mental power. The principles used in biological study and natural history are here applied to child study.

In 1888 a committee was formed by the British Medical Association to study school children as to their mental and physical status, and in conjunction with medical men on that committee, and others, I was enabled to examine individually 100,000 children upon a fixed plan, taking a written description on a schedule for each child in any one point subnormal, or reported by the teacher as dull or backward.

Groups of boys and girls can be studied when their classification is arranged on a basis of points observed in individual children. Observation shows the child's strong points which should be cultivated, as well as his weak ones which must be combated. The interaction of classmates on one another may be observed by the teacher who observes the individual child under varied

conditions. The importance of what have been called eye-mindedness and ear-mindedness, as well as action of the hand controlled through the eye, becomes emphasised to the mind of the observer.

Some generalisations, in the form of Propositions concerning Childhood, are given in the last chapter; it seems possible to attain a working consensus in interpreting much that we see for the practical purposes of education and the care of children. When the groups of children to be cared for are clearly discriminated, the educational methods needed for each can be more readily worked out.

Studies in psychology often emphasise the great mental differences among children; observation of the children themselves shows points of resemblance and difference, normal and subnormal, by which they may be grouped and compared.

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NOTE OF EXPLANATION

In case the system of grading pupils by Standards in use in the London schools in which Dr. Warner made his examinations is not perfectly familiar to all his readers, it should be stated that bright children at six years of age should be found in Standard I.; at seven in Standard II.; at eight in Standard III.; at nine or ten in Standard IV. or V.; at eleven or twelve in Standard VI. or VII. Possibly the majority of children will be from three to six months behind this estimate.