

A PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF BABYHOOD

*The Mental Development and Mental Hygiene
of the First Two Years of Life*

BY
JESSIE CHASE FENTON

With Illustrations

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY JESSIE C. FENTON

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press

CAMBRIDGE • MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

PREFACE

THIS book is intended for all persons who are interested in babies. It is hoped that it may prove of service to students of child psychology in universities and teachers' colleges, but more especially it is addressed to mothers, since it is they who have the most intimate need for an adequate understanding of the way a baby's mind develops and the influences which affect it.

In selecting and presenting the material of the book, several aims have been kept in mind:

To present in simple language, intelligible to readers who have had no training in technical psychology, a description of the fundamental facts of infant nature, the powers and possibilities of the child at birth, and the manner in which his mental and emotional development proceeds.

To bring together the data from the more important psychological studies of individual babies, both by way of illustration for the principles presented, and in order to furnish the mother an opportunity to compare the progress of her own child with that of other babies whose psychological history has been observed and recorded.

To point out the great importance of the influences surrounding the first years of life, both for the sake of their immediate effects and for the sake of their influence on lifelong mental and emotional habits.

To give definite, practical, and specific directions for the application of sound psychological principles in the details of daily care and training of babies.

Above all, to awaken mothers to a better sort of love and sympathy for babyhood than mere maternal tenderness, no matter how ardent — a love and sympathy that shall effectively promote the child's best interests, being based on understanding of child nature and child needs — and to contribute thereby to the richness and joy of the experience of parenthood.

A book of this kind involves necessarily considerable dependence on the work of other psychologists. Acknowledgment of such indebtedness is made in the pages of the text. The bibliography makes further reference to such works as are likely to prove of interest to the readers for whom this book is intended.

I wish in particular to make grateful acknowledgment of my obligation to Dr. Lewis M. Terman for his critical reading of the manuscript and many helpful suggestions, and to my husband for advice, assistance, and encouragement, without which the task of preparing this book would never have been completed.

JESSIE C. FENTON

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA
August, 1925

INTRODUCTION

BY

LEWIS M. TERMAN

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

BABYHOOD is the most fascinating of the 'ages of man' and its psychology is the most interesting chapter in the science of mental development. This has long been recognized, as is shown by the fact that the last forty years have given us a vast number of books, treatises, and monographs dealing with the first three years of childhood. It is unfortunate that the great majority of these contributions have been addressed to psychologists and physicians, and therefore contain little that has interest or practical value for the average intelligent parent.

Mrs. Fenton's book differs from all others in its field, for, true to its title, it is really a *practical* psychology of babyhood. Moreover, as its subtitle indicates, it deals with the mental hygiene of this period as well as with the specific facts of early growth and development. It is neither, on the one hand, an undigested record of observations and experimental findings, nor, on the other hand, a literary effusion on the charms of babyhood. It is a true account of the unfolding of mind and personality under the helpful or hindering influences of environment and training. It can be read with pleasure and profit by any mother of ordinary intelligence. Indeed, it is a book for re-reading and constant reference, a *vade mecum* that should add immeasurably to the joys of motherhood. The most important scientific findings on the psychology of babyhood are here brought together in a way that shows their great significance for everyday training and care.

Let no one underestimate the importance of infant training. At no other period in life are character and mental habits so rapidly taking shape. Sensation, perception, habit-formation, thinking, curiosity, speech, fear, anger, jealousy, love, play, sleep, rest, feeding, dressing, and bathing all give rise to important psychological and pedagogical problems which here receive helpful treatment. Although Mrs. Fenton's book will prove an excellent text for use with classes in child psychology, its greatest field of service will be in the education of mothers to a more understanding appreciation of the nature and needs of babyhood.

CONTENTS

I. THE NEWBORN BABY	3
Appearance and structure — Crying — Other reactions at birth — Sight — Hearing — Temperature — Touch and motion — Taste — The life of sensation in general — Power of movement — The Darwinian reflex — The effect of rage on muscular strength — Classification of movements — Impulsive or spontaneous movements — Reflex movements — Instinctive movements — The dawn of consciousness.	
II. PLAY	21
Play as an index to general development — The earliest play — Play activities of the first two years — Elements in infantile play — Practical considerations — Special games and plays — Bedtime play — Toys — Theories of play.	
III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SENSES	58
VISION: Elements in vision — Early stages in sight — Disappearance of random movements — Winking — Distance — Recognition of faces — Size of objects seen — Practice in vision — Color vision — HEARING: Beginning of hearing — Progress in hearing — Localization of sound — The combination of sensations — SMELL — TASTE.	
IV. LEARNING TO USE THE HANDS	82
Early hand and arm movements — Grasping — Coöperation of sight and touch — Other modes of grasping — Distance — Right- and left-handedness — Specialization of the hand.	
V. LEARNING TO WALK, AND BRINGING THE BODY UNDER CONTROL	98
The instinctive nature of walking — Factors in learning to walk — Development of movements preliminary to walking: control of head and spine — Balancing the head — How the ability to walk developed in one child.	

VI. LANGUAGE	118
Speech and instinct — Beginnings of vocal habits: the reflex stage — Cry and gesture stage — Babble stage — Specialization of babble sounds — Practical implications — Imitation — Fluctuations in the rate of word-learning — Size of vocabulary — Character of the child's vocabulary — 'Natural' or onomatopoetic words — Use of sentences — Thinking aloud — Comprehension of words precedes use — Encouragement of speech — Method of recording a child's vocabulary.	
VII. THE DAWN OF MIND	145
The earliest learning — Elements of mind — How to provide the materials for mental growth — Association — Mechanical nature of the association-forming process — Word-associations — The learning of 'tricks' — Practical considerations — General principles regarding association — The transfer of associations.	
VIII. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER MENTAL PROCESSES	170
Memory — The stimulation of memory — Imitation — Imitation from memory — Significance of imitation — The dawn of reason — The adaptation of behavior — Inference and imagination.	
IX. INTELLIGENCE AND MENTAL TRAINING	200
The nature of intelligence — The distribution of intelligence — The stability of intelligence — Intensive training in infancy — The problem of mental culture — Suitable materials for learning — Attitudes toward learning — The encouragement of curiosity.	
X. THE EMOTIONAL LIFE: RAGE AND FEAR	215
The importance of infancy in founding emotional habits — Expression of emotion — Emotional expression in the infant — Crying — Causes for rage — The prevention of anger — The nervous child — Impatience — Fear — Early signs of fear — Fear of people — Removal of support — Fear of animals — The transfer of fear — Curiosity and its effect on fear — Treatment of fear — Fear of the dark — Possible confusion of rage and fear.	

CONTENTS

xi

XI. THE EMOTIONAL LIFE: THE MILDER EMOTIONS	239
Pleasure — Smiles — Laughing — Social quality of first smiles — The habit of cheerfulness — Means for insuring good-nature — Affection — The influence of training — The growth of affection — Sympathy — Jealousy — Astonishment.	
XII. SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN TRAINING AND CARE	259
Feeding — Dressing — Bathing — Sleep — Bowel movements — Wetting — Discipline — Obedience — 'Don'ts' — Childish faults — Thumb-sucking — Pulling ears, nose, etc. — Masturbation — Destructiveness — Cruelty — Individuality — Selfishness — Helpfulness — Praise — Hurts and bumps — Overstimulation — Parents and children — Overdependence — The force of example.	
XIII. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD AS A TOTAL PERSONALITY	297
The child at three months — Six months — Nine months — Twelve months — Eighteen months — The two-year-old.	
APPENDIX: BLANK FOR RECORDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD	315
A BRIEF SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON CHILD PSYCHOLOGY	343
INDEX	347

ILLUSTRATIONS

AN INSTANCE OF GENUINE AFFECTION	<i>Frontispiece</i>
JOY IN BEING A CAUSE (NINTH MONTH)	28
THROWING A BALL (THIRTEENTH MONTH)	32
HELPING TO SHELL PEAS (TWENTY-THIRD MONTH)	38
A BIG BALL IS EASIER TO HANDLE THAN A SMALL ONE	48
A SMALL CHAIR TO SIT ON MIGHT BE CONSIDERED AS A NECESSITY MORE PROPERLY THAN AS A TOY	52
AN APPLE-BOX OR AN OLD MARKET-BASKET PROVIDES FINE PRACTICE IN CLIMBING	56
OUTDOOR SIGHTS OFFER VISUAL EXPERIENCES OF ESPECIAL INTEREST	66
AN EARLY STAGE IN HAND-SKILL	90
SKILL AND STRENGTH IN THE USE OF THE HANDS	96
STAGES IN CRAWLING	104
FROM HIS TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK ON HIS TOES WERE AMONG HIS MOST FASCINATING PLAY-THINGS	108
STANDING ALONE	112

HOLDING THE ARMS ABOVE THE HEAD, AN AD- VENTURE IN BALANCE	112
WALKING WITH SUPPORT	112
SOME LATER DEVELOPMENTS IN MOTOR SKILL	116
KEEN ATTENTION	158
THREE STAGES IN CRYING	222
BY THE MIDDLE OF THE FIRST YEAR IT HAD BE- COME APPARENT THAT SMILING WAS IN ITSELF AMUSING	240
'MAKING A FUNNY FACE'	244
AT SIX MONTHS HE IS AN EAGER, VIVACIOUS LITTLE CREATURE, CHARMINGLY RESPONSIVE AND JOLLY	304
AT TWO YEARS HE IS BEGINNING TO SEEM QUITE GROWN UP	312

**A PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY
OF BABYHOOD**

A PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF BABYHOOD

• • •

CHAPTER I

THE NEWBORN BABY

Appearance and structure

It is fortunate that a mother's love for her child is rooted in something deeper and more primitive than the baby's own charm. Many mothers, to be sure, can see nothing that is not lovely in the tiny new son or daughter, but to the unprejudiced observer, and even to not a few mothers, the first sight of a new baby is something of a shock. There is little enough to admire in his appearance. He is ridiculously small, very red and often blotchy as to color, curled up absurdly, armadillo-wise, with short bow legs drawn up over a large bulging abdomen; his head is likely to be flattened or peaked or otherwise misshapen from the cruel strictures of birth; his eyes, when they are not tightly closed, roll meaninglessly and without relation to each other, now crossed, now divergent, in their blank unseeing gaze. Such is the unpromising beginning of the human species. Such an unfinished and amorphous creature the newborn infant seems that a sneeze or yawn or other common human gesture is a ground for surprise and amusement. One hardly expects the ridiculous little thing to do things like these, just like a real person!

He is recognizably human, of course, but so different from the human adult as to seem almost a different kind of crea-

ture. His body is built in very different proportions. The arms and legs seem ridiculously short. In a grown man the legs alone comprise half the total stature, but in a baby the midpoint of his length falls well up on the abdomen. The head of the infant is relatively large, it is greater in circumference than the chest at birth, and not until the child approaches three years does the chest overtake it in girth. Because of the undeveloped jaw, the face is very short in a baby, and is set low in the head as a whole, with the result that the great expanse of brow gives him an appearance comically grave and learned-looking.

The bones of a newborn child consist chiefly of cartilage or gristle; hence they are soft and flexible, not stiff and hard like ours. Ossification, or bone-formation, advances rapidly in a healthy child, though in certain unfavorable conditions, such as rickets (a disease due chiefly to improper diet), the bones remain soft and are likely to become misshapen, as in bow legs, 'pigeon breast,' etc. The bony plates enclosing the skull are not yet welded together in a baby. At the top of the head there is a considerable gap between the bones, and another smaller one at the back of the head. Under these open spots, or fontanelles, the pulse-beat may be felt in the soft brain beneath. These openings render the birth of the child easier, since they make it possible for the head to be compressed considerably. They furthermore leave room for the brain to grow after birth. The rear fontanelle closes in a few weeks, but the one at the top of the head usually does not become firmly knit until about the eighteenth month. When this soft spot closes prematurely the growth of the brain is likely to be retarded, and the child to remain small-headed (microcephalous), with possible retardation of mental development.

We might go on at great length to show how the body of the infant differs in almost every part from that of the adult;

not only in size and proportion, but in actual composition. The baby's blood is differently composed, and his pulse rate is more rapid and more variable than in an adult; his breathing is more rapid, his temperature higher and more variable. The body of the young foetus is 97.5 per cent water; in the newborn child water makes up 74.7 per cent of the body, while in the adult it is only 58.5 per cent of the bodily constituents. Not only must the baby grow, but the chemistry of his body must undergo a long series of changes before he becomes in a strict sense the same kind of creature as his parents.

Crying

The newborn baby is by no means entirely helpless and vegetative; he is able to perform a number of activities from the moment of birth. Indeed many reactions have been developed, or rather have been possible, for some time before birth, since babies born prematurely possess them. Usually the first, and always the most insistent act of post-natal life is a cry, a thin, persistent, monotonous wailing or screaming. This is usually uttered on a flat, shrill *a-a* sound, but it is not true, as popular theory would have it, that babies the world over invariably announce their entry into life with the same sound, for instances of practically all the sounds that can be formed by the baby's vocal organs have been observed as the birth cry.

The fact that a wail is so frequently the first act of human-kind has in past times seemed of peculiar significance to philosophers and psychologists. The range of interpretations that have been advanced is amusing. Schwartz thought it a shout of joy. Kant avers that 'the outcry that is heard from a child just born has not the tone of lamentation, but of indignation and aroused wrath; not because anything gives him pain, but because something frets him;