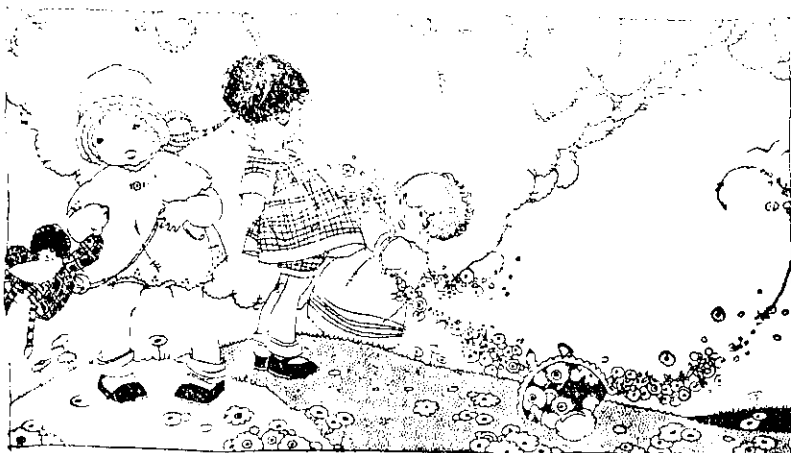


Parents and their Children

The Creative Mind of the Child and its Latent Powers



A young mother, recounting her experiences when taking her little girl to introduce her to the Kindergarten mistress on the first day of school, says that she went with the idea of amazing the authorities by her description of Sybil's cleverness and achievements at five years of age. She found a dozen other mothers waiting for their interview, and had the good fortune to hear the opinions of these parents, who also seemed to have brought intellectual prodigies to lighten the humdrum ways of the school. At least six little Paulines were the possessors of far too active brains, and their mothers felt the remedy was learning to read as soon as possible; they also gave promise of a brilliant future in mathematics, as they loved to count everything; and their insatiable desire for stories and poetry showed a distinct bent for authorship.

Six little Philippas had equally remarkable talents; but here, it was felt that the bearing-rein was needed; they must be held back, lest pressure, from without and within, should result in meningitis or other disasters to the delicately poised brains and nervous systems. As Sybil's mother listened she suddenly realised with amusement and some self-mockery that what she, in common with all these other mothers, had thought brilliant and unusual in her child were characteristics common to all normal children; and grateful that this awakening had come in good time, she abandoned her child to the tender mercies of the Kindergarten mistress with no more introduction than "This is Sybil," and beat a hasty retreat.

As she went home she wondered if one could ever positively say that a child was destined to be clever or not, and asked herself what exactly is meant by cleverness. Was it the memorising of certain facts and ideas prescribed by a school curriculum heavy with the tradition of the ages? Could the child who learned to read in a month keep the pace in all the other branches of knowledge throughout school life?

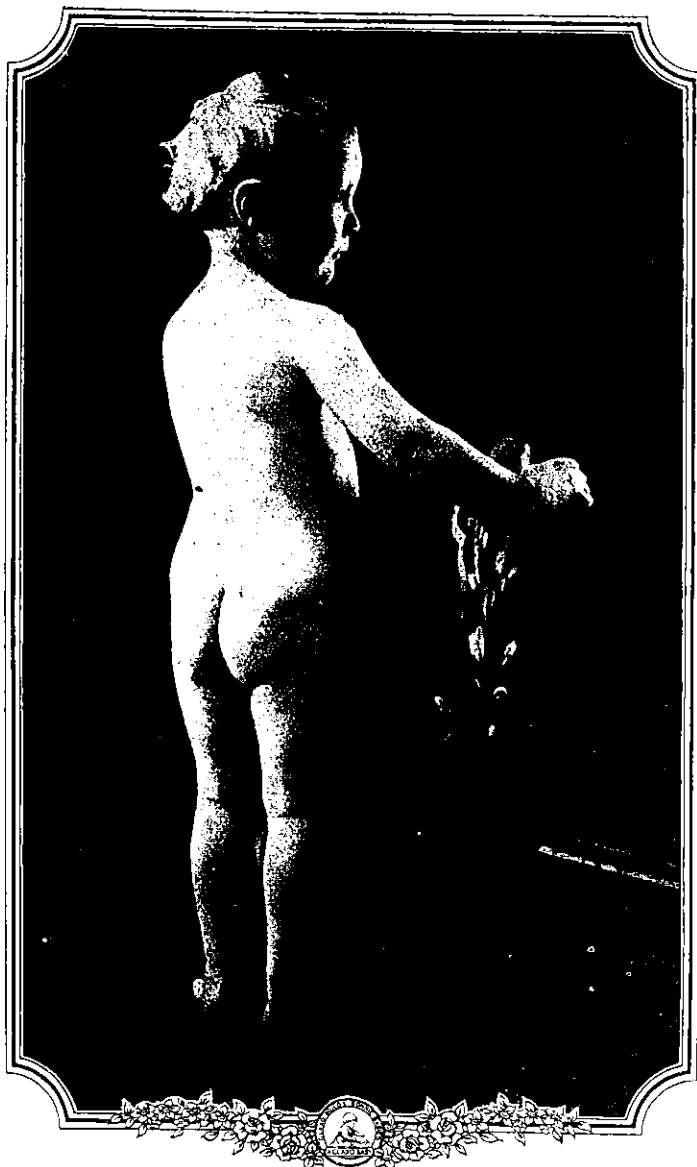
One may consider the well-authenticated facts of the school records of some famous people when we, too, seek to answer these questions. Darwin was incapable of mastering any language, and when he left school he says, "I was considered by all my masters and by my father a very ordinary boy rather below the common standard in intellect. To my deep mortification, my father once said to me, 'You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family.'"

Napoleon graduated forty-second in his class. "Who," asks a thoughtful man, "were the forty-one above him?" Humphry Davy, Goldsmith, and many others showed no sign at school of the powers they afterwards displayed. The school record, therefore, is no criterion of the child's intelligence or intellectual powers for the brilliant man or woman was often prescribed as dull at school, and vice versa.

According to school standard, many so-called clever children are merely receptive and fortunately endowed with retentive powers, and these same standards by their narrowness may balk the larger-natured child with high ideals, and so this child is considered dull or indolent. The stultifying effects of a narrow curriculum are too often seen in the little offenders against the majesty of the law who find their way into the Juvenile Courts. Boys who are born leaders, with initiative and ability to carry through courageous with the result that they find themselves, have no outlet for these gifts, selves in disgrace and offenders at an early age.

The child who prefers to find occupations and his own methods of carrying them through without advice or help is often stigmatised as wilful, whereas this probably is a clever child who should be given scope and freedom, and interference and attempts at thwarting him tactfully avoided, or disastrous consequences will result.

Initiative is the primary test of the clever child, and this should be sympathetically dealt with from the



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