

Child Study and Child Training

CHAPTER I

CHILD STUDY DOMESTICATED

WHAT IS A CHILD?

A very natural and common answer to this question is, A little adult. It is an easy supposition that a child is like a grown-up human being except that he is less. He is evidently smaller in body, he knows less, he can do less. But we shall discover in this course that the child is not so much less as he is different. The body of a little child, for example, is not only smaller than that of an adult, but its proportions are very different. He not only knows less, but he thinks differently. Tracy compares a child's intellect to that of an adult by comparing a pane of glass to a prism. He has psychical as well as physical traits that are so different from those that he will possess when mature that they resemble those possessed by the lower animals. "Intellectually and morally," as Bolton points out, "he lives in a realm long ago passed over by his parents and teachers," and not only so, but they, in turn, have so completely moulted their childish traits that they would not recognize themselves as they were if an exact reproduction of their own child life could be furnished them.

It is this theory that the child is simply a small adult, coupled with the inability of adults to recollect, that explains many established misunderstandings of children. This it was that suggested the theological definition of a child as "a little sinner." This it is that explains the conduct of an ignorant parent who thumps a child into docility, on the ground that he knows as much as the parent does, but is merely obstinate.