

Chapter 2

Thoughts on Early Childhood

It is said that a person's character is formed by the age of five and that their surroundings during the formative years affect them for the rest of their lives. If this is so, what a shame that most of it is forgotten. All I have are vague recollections of hammers, nails, beetles, chickens and very little else.

If memories were more precise, it would be possible to use them as a way of doing a better job of bringing up one's own children; surely, at least the elder child would gain. As it is, I believe that most parents, including me, expect more of their first child when they are very young than should be reasonably expected. Discipline is harsher, chiefly because parents are ignorant and afraid of their first born turning into a hooligan. The second child comes along and is treated much more sensibly and with greater tolerance. By this time, parents know better and, in any case, are so occupied with two or more children, that they settle down to bring up the family in a much more expansive way.

I believe also that the first child is the unwitting subject of a change in married life and the cause of a change in the marriage. From two people totally preoccupied with one another, sex at any time and anywhere (although I always thought that bed was the most comfortable, if not the most exciting) there is suddenly a third. Life must change. The mother gets too preoccupied and the father can often resent this. What a shame that we are unable to remember how our own parents tackled these problems.