

THE BIOGRAPHY OF AN INFANT.

An account by M. Taine, which appeared in the April number of *Mind*, of the mental development of an infant, has led Mr Darwin to publish in the same magazine a biographical sketch of one of his children from notes taken 37 years ago. The perfection of the reflex actions in the first week of infancy, he remarks, shows that the imperfection of the voluntary ones is not due to the state of the muscles or of the co-ordinating centres, but to that of the seat of the will. The movements of his limbs and body were for a long time purposeless, and usually performed in a jerking manner; but there was one exception to this rule—namely, that from a very early period he could move his hands to his own mouth. In development the right hand was a week in advance of the left; yet the child proved afterwards to be left-handed, the tendency being no doubt inherited. It was difficult to decide at how early an age anger was felt; on his eighth day he frowned and wrinkled the skin round his eyes before a crying fit; but this may have been due to pain or distress, and not to anger. When nearly four months old, and perhaps much earlier, there could be no doubt, from the manner in which the blood gushed into his whole face and scalp, that he easily got into a violent passion. About the age of two years and three months he became a great adept at throwing books or sticks at anyone who offended him; and so, Mr Darwin remarks, it was with some of his other sons. As he never could see a trace of such aptitude in his infant daughter he thinks that a tendency to throw objects is inherited by boys. Fear is probably one of the earliest feelings which is experienced by infants as shown by their starting at any sudden sound when only a few weeks old, followed by crying. It is well known how intensely older children suffer from vague and undefined fears. May we not suspect that the vague but very real fears of children which are quite independent of experience are the inherited effects of real dangers and abject superstitions during ancient savage times. It is quite conformable with what is known of formerly well-developed characters that they should appear at an early period of life, and afterwards disappear. This infant smiled when 45 days old, a second infant when 46 days old, and these were true smiles indicative of pleasure, for their eyes brightened and eyelids slightly closed. At four months he showed in an unmistakable manner that he liked to hear the piano-forte played; so that here, apparently, was the earliest sign of a pleasurable feeling, unless the attraction of bright colours, which was exhibited much earlier, may be so considered. Affection probably arose very early in life. When nearly five months old he plainly showed his wish to go to his nurse, but he did not spontaneously exhibit affection by overt acts until a little over a year old. Sympathy and jealousy were also very clearly shown at an early age. The facility with which associated ideas due to instruction, and others spontaneously arising were acquired, seemed by far the most strongly marked of all the distinctions between the mind of an infant and that of the cleverest full-grown dog he had ever known. Curiosity, as M. Taine remarked, is displayed at an early age by infants, and is highly important in the development of their minds; imitation, likewise, soon comes into play. The first sign of moral sense was noticed at the age of nearly 13 months. I said—"Doddy (his nickname) won't give poor papa a kiss; naughty Doddy." These words, without doubt, made him feel slightly uncomfortable; and at last when I had returned to my chair, he protruded his lips as a sign that he was ready to kiss me. About this time it became easy to work upon his feelings and make him do whatever was wanted. The unabashed manner in which young children can stare, without blinking their eyes, at a new face, I believe, is the result of their not thinking in the least about themselves, and therefore not being in the least shy, although they are sometimes afraid of strangers. At exactly the age of a year he made the great step of inventing a word for food—namely, *wum*, but what led him to it I did not discover. And now, instead of crying when he was hungry, he used this word in a demonstrative manner or as a verb implying "give me food." This word corresponds with *ham* as used by M. Taine's infant at the age of 14 months. I was particularly struck with the fact that when asking for food by the word *wum*, he gave it a most strangely-marked interrogatory sound at the end. I did not then see that this fact bears on the view which I have elsewhere maintained, that before man used articulate language he uttered notes in a true musical scale, as does the anthropoid ape *Hyllobates*.