

Quintuplets, Late in Learning How to Talk, Advanced Rapidly Once They Got Started



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When the photo at the left was taken—way back in December, 1935—the quints couldn't talk and didn't seem to want to try. The picture shows Yvonne and Marie, isolated in a play-pen for study by the



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psychologists. . . . They can talk now, though—and in the other photo Emilie looks up reverently at a picture of the Christ Child and says her evening prayers.



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A far cry from the five helpless youngsters who had to grunt and gesture to make their wants known—the Dionne quintuplets with Dr. [unclear]

Soft Contralto Voices Now Use 185 Words, Psychologists Told

By BRUCE CATTON

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TORONTO, Ont., Nov. 2.—The Dionne quintuplets learned to talk slowly, but they came on with a grand rush when they did get started.

"Right now they are acquiring new words faster than ordinary children of their age acquire them. And having learned to talk, they are using their newly developed powers as much as the traffic will bear."

"They have a total joint vocabulary of 185 words and the nursery at Callander echoes to their soft-voiced conversation from sunup to sundown."

"Incidentally, they have very low contralto voices."

All of this is revealed in a paper on the quintuplets' language development, written by W. E. Blatz, M. L. Fletcher and M. Mason of St. George's School for Child Study of the University of Toronto. The study was one of several made of the quintuplets by Dr. Blatz and his coworkers.

Psychologists have shown that single children learn to talk before twins do. The child who grows up in company with another child of his own age can communicate with his playmate through grunts and gestures. The child who grows up without such a companion, however, has to learn to talk to make his wants known.

If this is true of twins, how much more would it be true of quintuplets! Each of these girls has four playmates, instead of just one at the same stage. From the time they first crawled around the nursery together, the quints had a code of gestures, squeals and jabberings by which they could understand each other. They should worry about language!

"Non! Non!" (with much head-shaking). "Marie 'la'—pointing. "Moi Annette!"

All of the girls can say "Yvonne" without trouble. They have a way of turning R into W, which makes Marie, "Mawie." Annette becomes "Nannette," and Cecile becomes "Teeetele." And Emilie is "Meelle."

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