**THE HAUNTED HOUSE**

Although the house needed decoration and repair, the Longs decided to buy it. It was rather big, the price was very low and it was in the centre of London. Both Mr. and Mrs. Long had jobs in the city, so this was important. There was also a good school nearby for their six-year-old daughter, Jane, to go to. Some time later, they learnt about the owner of the house and the terrible things that happened there. The first sign of trouble came just before they moved in. The workmen who did the redecoration refused to work in the house after dark. "I'm frightened", one of them said. Then, when the Longs started living in the house, they noticed that the rooms were cold, even though it was the middle of a warm summer. Their daughter began waking up in the middle of the night, screaming. She said she could hear strange voices and that they belonged to dead people. The voices told her that somebody had killed them in the house and buried their bodies in the garden. "At first we thought she was just having nightmares, but then my husband and I heard strange noises, as well, "Mrs. Long says. Sometimes, they both heard more than just strange noises. "One night, just before George and I went to bed, we heard a woman's voice that seemed to come from nowhere. It said only a few words, 'No, no! Stop!' But we both heard it very clearly", Mrs. Long says. Shortly after this, Mrs. Long learnt from a neighbour more about the history of the house. It once belonged to Gordon Taplow, who hanged himself in prison. They say that he murdered three women in the kitchen of the house and dismembered their bodies. Then he buried the various pieces of the bodies in different parts of the garden. After his arrest and death in 1959, many people bought and sold the house several times, but nobody ever lived in it for very long. Months, and even years, passed without anybody living in it at all. Mr. and Mrs. Long think that they know the reason for this. "Although nobody has found the bodies of the three women in the garden, he must have buried them somewhere. Therefore the house is haunted by their ghosts. My husband and i are not superstitious but what other possible explanation is there?"

**OUR FIRST WORDS**

Is language, like food, a basic human need without which a child can be starved and damaged at a critical period of life? In the thirteenth century, Frederic II made a frightening experiment to find an answer to this question. He was hoping to discover what language a child would speak if he heard no language at all so he. told the mothers in the experiment to keep silent. The results of the experiment show that hearing no language at all can be very harmful for a child. All the babies in the experiment died before the first year. Was the deprivation of language the only reason for their death? Obviously, there was more than language deprivation here. What was missing was good mothering. Without good mothering, in the first year of life especially, the capacity to survive is seriously affected. Today no such extreme language deprivation exists as that in Frederic II's experiment. However, some children are still backward in speaking. Most often the reason for this is that the mother can't understand or doesn't notice the cues and signals of the baby, whose brain is programmed to absorb language rapidly. There are critical times, it seems, when children learn more easily. If the mother can't deal with these important periods properly, the ideal time for learning skills passes and they might never be learned so easily agajn. A bird learns to sing and to fly rapidly at the right time, but the process is slow and hard if the critical stage has passed. Linguists suggest that certain stages in language development are reached in a fixed sequence and at a constant age, but there are children who start speaking late and who, eventually, become very intelligent. At twelve weeks, a baby smiles and produces some sounds; at twelve months, he can speak simple words and understand simple commands; at eighteen months he has a vocabulary of three to fifty words. At three he knows about 1000 words which he can put into sentences, and at four his language differs from that of his parents in style rather than grammar. Recent evidence suggests that a baby is born with the capacity to speak. What is special about man's brain is the complex system which enables a child to connect the sight and feel of things with their sound pattern. The child's brain is also able to pick out an order in language from the sounds around him, to analyse, to combine and recombine the parts of a language in new ways. However, the child's language development depends on his communication with his mother. The mother should always understand and respond to the cues and signals in the child's crying, smiling and his attempts to speak. If she fails to do that, the child will stop trying to speak. In other words, paying attention to the child's non-verbal cues is verj' important for the growth and development of language.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DINOSAURS?**

A number of different theories have been proposed to explain the death of the dinosaur. We know that about thirty species lived in North America from 120 to 200 million years ago. We also know that the dinosaur was not a very intelligent animal - most dinosaurs had very small brains - and that they lived on earth for 100 million years. What we don't know is why they suddenly disappeared. Obviously something very unusual happened, which caused their death. There are a lot of possibilities. One is that North America was hit by an enormous drought. However, bones from thirty-five dinosaur species have just been discovered in China, and it has been found out that they died at the same time as the ones in America, so it seems very unlikely that drought was responsible. It was a world problem, not a local one, that killed them all. The popular idea that human beings killed the dinosaur is also wrong. Humans didn't arrive until a million years ago. Acid rain, surprisingly, is one of the newer theories. It is possible that pollution from acid rain was caused by a meteor crashing into the earth. Changes in climate might also have been responsible. Either an ice age (there have been two ice ages since then) or an increase in world temperatures could have been enough to kill the dinosaurs. Anyway, there is a lesson here for human beings. If the dinosaurs can all disappear, so can we.