The educational ideas of Pestalozzi and Fröbel

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THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAS
OF
PESTALOZZI AND FRÖBEL.

BY

F. H. HAYWARD,
D. LIT., M.A., B.Sc. (LOND.), B.A. (CANTAB.), F.C.P.
PRINCIPAL OF THE PUPIL TEACHERS' CENTRE FOR THE TORQUAY AND DARTMOUTH
DISTRICT. AUTHOR OF "THE ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SIDGWICK,"
"THE STUDENT'S HERBART," ETC.

"Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that more lie all his hopes of good."

—Matthew Arnold.

London:
RALPH HOLLAND & CO.,
TEMPLE CHAMBERS, E.C.
1904.
"We are influenced in our deeper, more temperamental dispositions by the life-habits and codes of conduct of we know not what unnumbered hosts of ancestors, which, like a cloud of witnesses, are present throughout our lives, and our souls are echo-chambers in which their whispers reverberate. . . . Our own soul is full in all its parts of faint hints, rudimentary spectres flitting for an instant at some moment of our individual life and then gone for ever; dim and scarcely audible murmurs of a great and prolonged life, hot, intense, richly dight with incident and detail that is no more; a slight automatism, perhaps, being the sole relic of the most central experiences of many generations, a fleeting fancy all that survives of ages of toil and blood, a feeling that only peeps out for a moment in infancy, the far-off dying echo of what was once the voice of a great multitude. . . . The soma is resonant in every cell, fibre and reflex are with reminiscences of extinct generations."

—Adolescence (Dr. Stanley Hall).
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AUTHOR’S NOTE.

The author will be glad to communicate with the readers of this book—especially with those who are using it in preparation for the Certificate Examination—if they wish for further information on any of the points raised.

PUPIL TEACHERS’ CENTRE,
TORQUAY, Oct. 1904.

N.B.—The references in brackets are as follows:—

G. = De Guimps’ Life of Pestalozzi.
P. = Pinloche’s Pestalozzi.
C. = Cooke’s translation of How Gertrude Teaches Her Children.
B. = Bowen’s Fröbel.
S.F. I. = Herford’s Students’ Fröbel, Part I.
S.F. II. = Herford’s Students’ Fröbel, Part II.
The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi and Froebel.

INTRODUCTION.

I am becoming more and more convinced that an author has no right to preface his work by an apology. If he thinks he could do better than he has done, he should keep his belief—or his work—to himself.

But education is a peculiar subject. Everyone here has an opinion, yet the wisest of our educators are the most convinced that nearly all the opinions expressed—their own included—are of extremely limited value, possessing, perhaps, a little relative truth, but none of an absolute and final kind. One who has the best of opportunities of knowing and is himself a constructive worker, frankly avows that “there are scarcely three teachers of mark in England who work on the same lines . . . .; our study of education is in its infancy.”* Of real authority there is so little that the most eminent educationalist in Germany, and, perhaps, in the world, has just been declared to be an unknown man in England; “only one leading scholastic bookseller in Manchester had previously heard of his name, did not keep his books in stock, and had to refer to London catalogues to ascertain the titles of his works, and which of them had been translated into English.”† Mr.

* School, July, 1904. † University Correspondent, July 1, 1904.
H. G. Wells' words of a few years ago still hold good in large measure: "there is nothing having any authority higher than individual opinion, nothing threshed out and permanently established. . . . From one lecturer in education comes one assertion, and from another another."* Meanwhile we go merrily on, appointing committees, officials, and teachers, and flattering ourselves with a belief that we are progressing—as we are, but in externals only.

One way, and perhaps only one, can lead to anything "threshed out and permanently established." We must select the three or five or eight or twelve most eminent of modern educators, and discover upon what matters—if upon any—they are approximately agreed. Sooner or later I intend, if energy and inclination last, and if opportunities allow, to undertake that task. There is, I am convinced, a very large measure of agreement, such as I have already proved† to exist between writers of opposite psychological schools like Herbart and Dr. Laurie; and fresh evidence of the same kind is daily coming forward for those who have eyes to appreciate it. If ever such a work appears, it will appear without prefatory apologies. Though it were the dullest book in existence, it would deserve a welcome from distracted teachers, for, as I have urged before, only by possessing ideal and scientific views on education—a pedagogical "court of appeal," in fact—will teachers ever be anything but helpless instruments in the hands of others, protest how strongly they may.

Meanwhile, having been asked to put into printed form my thoughts on Pestalozzi and Fröbel for those teachers who take their Certificate Examination in 1906, I should feel strongly inclined to apologise for my performance—but for one consideration. That consideration may be expressed in the words of Mr. Pellat's recent book: "nothing at all of a critical nature, so far as I can discover, has been written in this country of

* Educational Times, February, 1895. † School, April and May, 1904.
either Pestalozzi or Fröbel."* Now the present work is, in a measure, critical as well as sympathetic; and in the general absence of criticism of any kind—such criticism as will pave the way to an ultimate synthesis—it may possibly help to clear away a little educational fog. For the strong attitude taken up with regard to Rousseau—for the protest against those dogmas of his which bedraggle the best work of Pestalozzi and Fröbel, and from which only a few modern educators such as Herbart and Dr. Laurie have been able to keep themselves free—I offer no apology whatever. I rejoice to have the opportunity of protesting against the pernicious and extraordinary influence of this thief, parasite, rogue, and voluptuary of Geneva. At every educational council board stands the shadowy figure of Rousseau, its presence boding ill for the future of education. The favourite of Madame de Warens and Thérèse Levasseur is the leader from whom, all unknowing, the respectable school-manager or committeeman of modern days borrows almost all the educational philosophy he possesses. Progress generally knows its friends; but educational progress fails to recognise in Rousseau its bitterest and deadliest enemy, an enemy that, behind a mask and garb of seeming truthfulness and sagacity, hides the swine snout and the satyr hoof. But the most grievous of all the wounds that Rousseau inflicted on education was the way in which he prevented two inspired men like Pestalozzi and Fröbel from attaining to perfect clearness of view. Stanz, Burgdorf, Yverdun, and Keilhau, like the modern committee-room, seem to have been haunted by the spectre of this man. It is necessary to say, once for all, that despite the sparkle of many of Rousseau's suggestions, his influence is essentially pernicious and reactionary; "he took no step forward in education; what is true in his scheme is due mostly to Locke; what is his own is false and misleading"; his notions about education are "absurd."†

* Public Schools and Public Opinion, p. 43.
When he and his far nobler followers, Pestalozzi and Fröbel, denounce books and bookishness, we must frankly recognise the fact that they are (sometimes at least) talking nonsense. Obviously, too, they are inconsistent, for Rousseau’s name is essentially that of a bookwriter; and much of Pestalozzi’s best work was of the same kind; nay, as a teacher, he did more for the teaching of reading than any other man.* The "bookishness" that followed the Renaissance took wrong forms—that we may admit—and the protests of these men were therefore not wholly illegitimate; but it is pernicious and reactionary to talk—as Rousseau and Pestalozzi talked, and as many a modern "educationalist" talks†—of making schools less "bookish." Mr. Wells and every really sagacious educationalist know that they are not half "bookish" enough, though they may be "bookish" in wrong ways.

Other points have become increasingly clear to me in the course of putting together my notes—the essential originality of Pestalozzi as a worker, and the fidelity of Fröbel to his master. Apart from their Rousseau illusions, the soundness and sureness of their pedagogical tact betokened genius—nothing less. We are prone to smile at Pestalozzi, and to accept his confessions of incompetence readily; but he was, after all, a miracle-worker in practice, and an inspired seer in educational method. It is because Pestalozzi’s thoughts have been circulating in our midst for a century that we question his originality, but we have only to read his and others’ accounts of the schools of his time to realise how revolutionary were his methods. He himself tells us that the principle of Anschauung was wholly and entirely ignored by the teachers of the time. Mr. Wells speaks of him as "a man in a fog," as "a great failure," though in the latter respect standing in a noble succession, for "the greatest men have

* "Bookbinding," too, was one of the manual arts encouraged both by Pestalozzi and Fröbel.
† Mr. Gorst’s *Curse of Education* is merely the *Emile* minus its brilliance and originality.