

T H E S I S .

Subject, Life and Work of Pestalozzi

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As the pilot with a slight turning of his wheel changes the direction of a ship, so events seemingly unimportant in themselves, acting upon the impressible nature of a child, may effect his entire destiny. And in the life of Pestalozzi we find an illustration of the effects of early association in determining character and in shaping the events of life.

John Henry Pestalozzi was born on the 12th of January 1746 at Zurich, a town situated in the German part of Switzerland. His father was a physician and had a benevolent and unselfish character. Henry was but six years old when his father died and his mother although not wholly destitute, was obliged to practice the utmost economy to sustain the dignity of the family.

When his father died, he left his family in needy circumstances, so he implored their servant "the faithful Babeli," never to desert his wife and children. Babeli kept sacredly the promise she gave the dying man, and she had an equal share with the mother in bringing up the educatee. Thus Pestalozzi passed his childhood in an atmosphere of love, devotion, and peace of rigid economy and of noble generosity, self-forgetful, calm, and affectionate, that gave him that gentle sincere, and active piety which finds pleasure even in privation.

He chose the ministry as his profession but his first efforts at preaching proved a failure. He changed the study of theology for that of law. In doing this he avoided Scylla, only to fall into Charybdis.

The Government had established poor-houses for the suffering, where the

innocent child, the hardened sinner, the
 helpleas sick, and shiftless vagabond, were
 herded together. Pestalozzi tried to find a
 remedy for the growing evil, and proposed
 the establishment of schools in which in-
 struction in manual labor should be
 combined with the ordinary mental and moral
 training. Thus in 1775 we find him at the head
 of an "Industrial School for the Poor," at Yverly,
 probably the first school of its kind and
 the mother of hundreds now existing
 on both sides of the Atlantic. He struggled
 a long time in the noble cause of helping
 the poor, and in the end became poor
 himself. In 1780 the school had to be given
 up, but not discouraged he says: "My failure
 even showed me the truth of my plans."
 At this time, from necessity, as well as from
 choice, he began to write articles for a
 Swiss Journal, and to publish books in

which he appealed to the public to bestow their attention upon some of the most sacred interests of humanity. From 1780 to 1798 were published his books "The Evening Hour of the Hermit," "Leonard and Gertrude," "Christopher and Eliza," "Figures in my Spelling Book" etc. Although these writings were all distinguished by originality and thought, not one of them has made a greater impression and acquired more celebrity than "Leonard and Gertrude". In this tale, the scenes are so life that they at once enlist the feelings of the reader by presenting a picture of exalted virtue in the midst of crime and error. Here he shows that the mother should be the child's teacher when it is young, as she has so much influence over it.

After the French Revolution,

Pestalozzi's soul was moved with advice to do something for the sufferers. So he made an offer to the Government to go to that desolate valley there to collect and instruct the poorest of the children. This was at Stanz. His offer was accepted and henceforth his vocation of school master was fixed. This school was abandoned in 1799. In 1803 he was invited to Yverdow, here he soon had a hundred and fifty pupils and forty student teachers. For twenty years, with unremitting labor, Pestalozzi pursued his schemes of educational reform in an old castle at Yverdow. Visitors came from Germany, France, Austria, Russia, and even from the United States to examine his system.

Having thus briefly spoken of his life, I will mention something of his system of education. The best teachers, some one says,

perhaps are those who become such because of their great love for humanity, or because of their tender love for children. Pestalozzi is of this class. He is distinguished from other educators not more by what he did than by what he endeavored to do; in other words, his differentia is rather his aim than his method. He taught that the time of life when instruction should begin was at the hour of birth. The tuition begins from the moment that the child's senses are opened to the impressions of the surrounding world. He has not the least doubt but that the child begins to learn from his birth, and that the mother is his natural educator, and for an intelligent and effective system of education, the mother as well as the teacher must be trained for her special

work. The rightly educated child is the coming father or mother. His great belief in having mothers as teachers is shown plainly in "Leonard and Gertrude."

He thought a feature not to be overlooked in the sports of childhood was the intensity of the attention bestowed upon objects, therefore he taught that interesting objects should be placed before them, which tend to cultivate their perceptive faculties. This more than anything else has given rise to what are known as Object lessons.

Pestalozzi's method discarded the use of books, and his favorite maxim was "A child should never be told what he can find out for himself." He says training must be found for the child's heart as well as his head and hands, and as the heart is first influenced by the mother, she should

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be his first teacher. He taught that one should not expect too much from a child at first, but to question him concerning the subject so he may find out and correct his mistakes; and that attention is deadened by long expositions but roused by animated questions. He says "let these questions be short, clear and intelligible. So he may not be lead just to repeat but let them excite him to observe closely." He taught these and many other principles, some of which are not so well known. Though in a way his life was a failure yet it may be said that the devotion of his life as well as the truth of his pedagogic principles has been a power in the educational world. He was not distinguished for his learning or ability; his were the highest talents of a noble enthusiasm for the elevation of our race and an

inexhaustible love for man. Following the example of our divine Master, he gave himself for the good of others.

As the real organizer of the education of childhood and of the people, Pestalozzi has a right to the plaudite of all those who are interested in the future of the masses of the people.

The summer of 1890 witnessed the inauguration of a statue of Pestalozzi, which was unveiled in the market place of Yverdon amidst choruses of rejoicing and garlands of flowers. The statue represents Pestalozzi standing: with one arm he encircles a little girl: on the other side a bare-legged boy looks up into his benefactor's face with confidence and affection. On the base of the statue are inscribed the words from his speech at Birs: Benefactor of the poor at Neuhof, father of the orphans

at Stanz, founder of the National School at Burgdorf, educator of the people at Yverdon. Everything for others, for himself nothing". On the other side are his own immortal words: "I lived like a beggar to teach beggars to live like men."

When the centenary of his birth was celebrated by school-masters, not only in his native country, but throughout Germany, it was found that Pestalozzian ideas had been sown, and were bearing fruit over the greater part of central Europe.

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