

THESIS.

Subject, Froebel and The Kindergarten

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Frederick Froebel, in whose sayings and doings the tendencies of modern thought on education seem to culminate, was born at Oberweisbach, April 21, 1782. His father was a member of the old Lutheran Church, and the chief pastor of the district. His mother died before he was one year old thus leaving him mostly to the care of the servants, the church occupying his father's time.

When he was four years old his father married again. His new mother was very kind to him for a while, but soon he was left to the care of his brothers and the servants again. His early education was greatly neglected. He received only what he observed from nature, with the exception of having been

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taught to read by his father.

When ten years of age his uncle took him and sent him to school. During the four years he stayed with his uncle he did not gain as much knowledge as he might have done; but learned to love and reverence his uncle, and progressed considerably with observations of plants and animals.

On returning to his father he was obliged to choose a calling, as his father's means did not permit his going to the university. His first work ^{was} with a forester, his intention being to become a thorough agriculturist. After two years he returned home with a strong desire for knowledge of mathematics and natural science.

He entered Jena University

and remained one year and a half, being compelled to leave on account of scarcity of means. He returned home in low spirits, but decided to study architecture and went to Frankfort on-Main for that purpose. There he met Dr. Gruner, a disciple of Pestalozzi, who persuaded him to become a teacher.

That was the turning point in Froebel's life. He said when teaching his first lesson, it seemed he had found something he never had known, but always had missed and longed for. Soon he became dissatisfied with the method and was given Pestalozzi's works. These created a desire to see the great teacher and at his earliest convenience he spent sometime in the famous Institute. There he found

many things he liked and many he disliked. He returned to his school to study and reflect.

Troebel's thoughts and endeavors were now centered on the education and culture of man. He soon realized the all-important fact that a more thorough preparation was needed on his part. On leaving his school he was persuaded to accept the charge of three boys. He made a careful study of them, and following Rousseau's idea, obtained permission to live in isolation with them in the country. It was not long until he realized that isolation was a mistake, that the life which resulted from it was one-sided. He then took them to Yverdon for two years. These two years were very valuable to him as he received great inspiration from Pestalozzi.

Soon after this he wrote his "Education of Man", the book by which Froebel is best known. It consists of four parts. The first treats of the foundation of the whole. He says, "The aim of education is to represent life pure, inviolable, true to its vocation, and therefore holy." Also that man must be seen in the child in order that he be wholly developed; and therefore all his activities should be developed in the order in which they appear in the child. The second part treats of man in his earliest childhood. In this he instructs mothers, the whole book being written for mothers, to attend to his food, play, and everything that aids in development. He says, "Play in the beginning is only natural life, and is the highest stage of the child's development." The third

part treats of man as a boy. Pre-eminently the stage of learning. The fourth sets forth man as a scholar. In this he shows how he considers man may realize what is to be gained by education.

Froebel became a great educator and advanced many noble ideas, but the one act for which he is held in such high esteem by the people of to-day, is that he established the kindergarten. He saw that in order to bring about a reform in education there must be a change in the method of instructing the youngest of the children. In conferences with teachers that came to him for instruction, he found the schools greatly suffered on account of the child's neglect before the school age. Probably the best quality of Froebel was his love

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for children. His study of them showed him that restlessness is one of their chief characteristics. Not only of body but also of the mind.

The creation of the kindergarten was slowly developed in his mind. He had long cherished the idea of it before giving it a name. It is said Froebel conceived his first thought of the kindergarten by watching a child playing ball. He chose the ball no doubt on account of its being the symbol of unity, as he believed in the unity of education. He said, "Let life be considered as being but one in all its phases, as forming one complete whole."

The kindergarten received children before the usual school age. Each child was presented objects under the name of gifts, which served as material

for his exercises. These were in a box from which they were taken in succession, as the children were prepared to receive them. These were: 1. the ball; 2. the sphere and cube; 3. the cube divided into eight equal parts; 4. the cube divided into building bricks, which were to be used in construction; 5. the cube cut into twenty-seven equal cubes. To these others were added, such as paper for folding and braiding, modelling, wood carving, drawing etc. These gifts should enable the child to interpret the external world around him, and to give expression to the world within him. One of the chief objects of the kindergarten is to help the child to express himself. The first mode of expression is movement; the second song or rhythm; the third

the child's own language. He also said drawing as a means of expression is of highest value all through school life and afterwards. He said, "The best description of a thing is the thing itself - then a concrete model - then a picture, and last of all a statement in words."

Another great object of the kindergarten was to teach and study nature. The children were to be taught the love for flowers by gardening, and the love for living creatures by caring for pet animals. The songs and games abound in references to the child's natural surroundings. He laid down his fundamental ideas of educational principles in his "Mutter- und- Kose-lieder." Whoever understands this book understands his aim.

After establishing the kindergarten he opened a school for the training of women for teachers. The sum of nearly all his talks was that women should be educated if education advanced, for they are the educators of the human race.

His instruction in his school was not clear. The class consisted mostly of young girls who could not grasp the thought, and a great part of the time he did not follow one train of thought, but tears were often brought to their eyes by the earnest spirit which he manifested in his noble work.

His methods were opposed, still regardless of opposition and his own weakness he did a grand work for humanity.

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