

T H E S I S.

Subject, Comenius and his Works.

Name, Sarah E. Ruff.

"That rare genius, that gentle, fertile,
universal scholar," John Amos Comenius,
first saw the light at the little
Moravian village Nivnitz, March 28, 1592.
His father, a miller named Komestky,
was a member of the Moravian
church and died while his son was
still a child. This threw the great
educational reformer of after years
into the hands of guardians.

The early education of Comenius
which consisted of reading, writing,
a knowledge of the catechism, and the
beginnings of arithmetic was received
in the school of Strassnick. Not un-
til his sixteenth year did he take
up the study of Latin - the universal
instrument of all literature and of
international communication among
the learned. To the lateness of the

age at which he began Latin, is attributed his insight into the defects of educational methods. He was old enough to criticise while submitting to the methods used in those days.

At twenty we find him at the college of Herborn pursuing his theological studies, and a few years later residing at Amsterdam during which time he traveled, and studied at Heidelberg. In 1614 he returned to his native Moravia and being too young for the ministry was appointed rector of the Moravian school at Prerau. Here he at once tried to introduce improved methods of instruction. Four years later he was given the pastorate of Fulneck at which place was spent his happiest days. But these happy times were not to last; for about that

time the Thirty Years War broke out and with the terrors of war came the destruction of property. Fulneck was taken by the Spaniards and Comenius lost his library and all his manuscripts contained therein. During the next three years he resided with other Moravian pastors and wrote a book entitled "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart." His wife and child both died in 1622 and Comenius was left without those sacred ties which had added so much to his happiness.

And now again we find that pious, self-sacrificing, and zealous teacher wandering through Moravia and Bohemia wading the persecutions of the Jesuits. Finally the Austrian Government at the instigation of the

Jesuits proscribed the evangelical pastors
and Comenius with his fellow pastors
was compelled to seek some refuge.
He fled to Lissa, Poland and at once
engaged in reforming the schools.
While there he wrote his "Didactica
Magna" a work containing principles
patterned after Bacon, which were des-
tined to transform the schools of
Christian lands.

This work was followed by the "Janua
Linguarum Reserata" a remedy as he said
for the time spent in learning Latin
when philosophy and religion should
be receiving some attention. The Janua
taught "things" in connection with
words and was received with great favor,
being translated into fourteen different
languages.

Comenius now advocated that

a concise statement of all that had been done in each department of science be made, in order that the younger scientists who were working without a knowledge of what the older scientists had done, might be benefited and thus enabled to accomplish more. That this scheme might be realized, Comenius suggested the establishment of an institution in which these different departments should be represented by the ablest scholars and from which was to proceed this Pansophia.

In 1641 Comenius was invited to London by Parliament to open one of these schools, but just then war broke out between the followers of the king and those of Parliament and the plan formed for the establishment of the

"universal colleges" were overthrown.

Comenius was now invited to Sweden where he was very kindly received by Osenstern who influenced him to prepare a work "to bring the study of the Latin tongue to a greater facility." He settled for his work in Elbig, Prussia supported by DeBeer. This work the "Methodus Linguarum Novissima," being published, he received a call to reform the schools of Transylvania in Hungary. He went to Catak where he remained four years but did not accomplish very much in the way of reform. Here he wrote much, producing fifteen different works, among which was the "Orbis Pictus," the first illustrated school book.

It is said that about this time

he received a call to Harvard College
 in America, but this has been disputed
 by some. In 1654 Comenius returned
 to his former home at Lissa. The
 tribulations which had followed this
 patient man, now seemed to envelop
 him in a cloud of the deepest
 gloom. His house, his books, and
 all his manuscripts were again
 burned, this time by the Poles
 when they plundered Lissa in 1656.
 Again Comenius wandered over
 Germany until Lawrence De Geer
 offered him a home in Amsterdam.
 In this peaceful retreat he spent
 his remaining years in quiet al-
 though his last days were embittered
 by envious attacks upon his char-
 acter and methods. He died in
 1671 and was buried at Naardent

near Amsterdam. A monument erected to his memory marks the spot.

Comenius was far ahead of his own time and even ours and has given us many principles that have been valuable to us so that he has come to be known as the man who first infused into education the spirit and methods of a slowly developing modern science. One of the important reforms urged by Comenius we are just now learning to appreciate, this reform being co-ordination. Other principles advocated by this same reformer such as the method of teaching according to nature, and equal education of both sexes are used in the schools of today.

In planning his school system

Comenius strove to arrange a plan by which the lower course should meet the higher without a break from the primary school to the university.

In 1892, the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Comenius was celebrated in Germany, Great Britain, and America showing that although he was not fully appreciated in his own time, he is not forgotten by a grateful people.

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