

**HUGHES'S TEACHER'S
LIBRARY. THE
KINDERGARTEN AT HOME**

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Hughes's Teacher's Library. The Kindergarten at Home by Emily A. E. Shirreff

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EMILY A. E. SHIRREFF

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THE KINDERGARTEN

AT

HOME.

BY

EMILY A. E. SHIRREFF,

PRESIDENT OF THE FROEBEL SOCIETY.

JOSEPH HUGHES,

PILGRIM STREET, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, E.C.

1884.

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PREFACE.

THIS little book scarcely needs a Preface, but a few words may not be amiss to introduce it to the reader. Written originally for a periodical—*The Governess*—whose circulation was almost exclusively among teachers, it is republished now in the hope that it may be useful to a larger public. The method of its original form has left some traces; there are repetitions, here and there, intended to draw the attention of the reader to former papers, not perhaps at hand at the moment; but such things are left as they were written, since, after all, in grave matters, repetition is a comparatively slight defect, well compensated for by greater fulness of explanation.

One objection I feel myself open to—in speaking of home education as I have done. I urge it as a universal interest and duty, and yet, practically, it may be said that I write for one class alone, since only where they have both leisure and culture can we expect mothers to be capable of undertaking the task to which I invite them. This is partly true, and a most sad fact so far as it is true. The wholly ignorant mothers will not understand what we mean by a system of education, and the mother whose work is not at her own hearth, and who is forced by hard necessities to reduce the home to a

mere lodging, shared in common with husband and children, can evidently carry on no home-training of the latter. Yet it rests in her hands all the same, and therefore it is a first requisite of any healthy civilisation that mothers should not work out of home. Children belonging to the working-classes must doubtless depend for instruction, and for the larger part of their education, on schools, and these are provided in our days by every nation that has a sense of its own higher welfare. Nevertheless, there is a large portion of child-life that no school can cover, and this, in all classes alike, is, or ought to be, governed by the influence of the parents, and especially of the mother, if the latter understands her position and duties. And these the mother of any class may be brought to understand, and her work, provided it does not take her away from home, need not interfere with it—will, indeed, be far more favourable to it, than the so-called social duties of women of the wealthy classes. If the great principles of education were preached to the labouring classes; if it were made evident that schools can only take one portion of the task, and Church and Bible-teaching only help in another,—the appeal would reach the hearts of mothers as loudly in the one class as the other, and they would respond in the measure of their capacity and opportunities. And the more those who have leisure and knowledge feel the sacredness of their own task, the more sedulously will they endeavour to help the less favoured in theirs.

With large numbers far removed from poverty there is also great difficulty in undertaking the instruction of their children, and so delicately combined a system as that of Froebel would practically fail in their hands. But if mothers so placed knew the principles on which that work depends, they would know

also how far they must inevitably fail in practice, and how great is the responsibility that rests upon them beyond instruction in school-hours; they would grasp at every help schools or arrangements among neighbours might offer for supplying their own deficiencies in teaching and intellectual training, and thus be ready to aid instead of thwarting the good effects of such teaching in the general direction of the home life.

Anxious, then, as I am that Froebel's practical method should be introduced at home wherever distance or other obstacles make attendance at a Kindergarten difficult or impossible, yet it will be evident to all who even glance over these pages, that I offer in them less a practical guide to the introduction of the Kindergarten into home education, than an earnest appeal to mothers to fit themselves to make use of such a guide by mastering the fundamental principles on which it rests. I dwell upon Froebel's system, and set forth, to a certain extent, his practical method, but mainly in order to illustrate those principles which I entreat young mothers to lay to heart, and make the law of their daily life with their children. It would be vain to lay down the most admirable scheme of home management, if she who must conduct it were not animated by the same spirit as that from which the scheme emanated. On the other hand, let those who have time and culture become true disciples of Froebel, and they will find practical assistance enough in manuals, even in the absence of a trained teacher, to make the details of Kindergarten instruction comparatively easy.

Thus, more and more, as I wrote, I found that my work resolved itself into an exposition of that one most solemn phase of woman's life—the *Mother as educator*, demanding

knowledge, continued study of character, steady keeping in view of a high aim, and devotion in subordinating lesser and selfish aims to this ; so sublime a vocation, that we might well despair of the many attaining to its heights, if the same Eternal Law that made the duty had not laid in the hearts of mothers the love which makes labour light and sacrifice a joy.

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