

FROEBEL AS A PIONEER IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

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Froebel as a pioneer in modern psychology by E. R. Murray

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E. R. MURRAY

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BY

E. R. MURRAY

Author of "A Story of Infant Schools and Kindergartens"

"Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

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PREFACE

SOME day Froebel will come to his own, and the carefulness of his observation, the depth of his thought, the truth of his theories, and the success of his actual experiments in education will all be acknowledged.

There are few schools nowadays so modern as the short-lived Keilhau, with its spirit of freedom and independence and its "Arcopagus" in which the boys themselves judged grave misdemeanours while the masters settled smaller matters alone. There are few schools now which have such an all-round curriculum, including, as it did, the mother tongue as well as classics and modern languages; ancient and modern history; Nature study and Nature rambles; school journeys, lasting for two or three weeks and extending as far as Switzerland for the older lads, while the younger boys visited German towns and were made acquainted with peasant life; definite instruction in field-work, in building and carpentry, etc.; religious teaching in which Middendorf endeavoured "to show the merits of the religions of all nations"; physical training with the out-of-doors wrestling ground and shooting stand and gymnasium "for every spare moment of the winter," and organized games; and dramatic teaching where "classic dramas" and other plays were performed, and for which the boys built the stage and painted the scenes. There was even co-education, "flirtation being unknown," because all had their heads so full of more important matters,

but where free intercourse of boy and girl "softened the manners of the young German savages."

The purpose of this book is to show that all these things, besides the Kindergarten and the excellent plan for the Hclba Institute, did not come into being by chance, but were the outcome of the deep reflection of a man who combined the scientific with the philosophic temperament; and who, because his ideal as a teacher was "Education by Development," had made a special study of the instinctive tendencies, and the requirements of different stages of child development, as I have tried to prove in Chapters VI and VII.

I should like to explain one or two points, first, that though for all quotations I have referred to the most commonly used translations of Froebel's writings, yet I have frequently given my own rendering when the other seemed inadequate; secondly, that I have endeavoured to give the context as often as possible, and have also given the actual German words, that I might not be accused of reading in modern ideas which are not really in the text; and, lastly, that I have purposely repeated quotations rather than give my readers the trouble of turning back to another page.

In conclusion may I take this opportunity of paying grateful thanks first to Miss Alice Words and to Miss K. M. Clarke, without whose kind encouragement I should never have completed my task, and also to Professor Alexander for several helpful suggestions, and to Miss Ida Sachs for friendly help.

E. R. MURRAY.

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EXPLANATION OF REFERENCES

To the Works of Froebel quoted in the text

E = EDUCATION OF MAN. TRANSLATED BY W. N. HAILMANN.

M = MUTTER U. ROSE LIEDER. TRANSLATED BY F. AND E. LORD.

P = PEDAGOGICS OF THE KINDERGARTEN. TRANSLATED BY JOSEPHINE JARVIS.

L = LETTERS. } TRANSLATED BY EMILIE MICHAELIS
A = AUTOBIOGRAPHY. } AND H. KEATLEY MOORE, B.A., B.MUS.

CHAPTER I

FROEBEL'S ANTICIPATION OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

"A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him."

THE purpose of this little book is to show that Froebel's educational theories were based on psychological views of a type much more modern than is at all generally understood. It is frequently stated that Froebel's psychology is conspicuous by its absence, but in a somewhat close study of Froebel's writings I have been again and again surprised to find how much Froebel seems to have anticipated modern psychology.

A probable reason for the overlooking of so much sound psychological truth is to be found in the fact that much of it is obscured by details which seem to us trivial, but which Froebel meant as applications of the theories he was endeavouring to make clear to minds not only innocent of, but incapable of, psychology.

Most educationists have read "The Education of Man," but few outside the Kindergarten world are likely to have bestowed much thought on Froebel's later writings. It is in these, however, that we see Froebel watching with earnest attention that earliest mental development which is now regarded as a distinct chapter in mental science, but which was then largely if not entirely ignored.

With the same spirit of inquiry and the same field for investigation—for children acted and thought then as they act and think now—it is only natural that Froebel should have made at least some of the same discoveries as the genetic psychologist of to-day.

It would be unfair at any date to expect a complete psychology from a writer whose subject is not mental science, but education. Mistakes, too, one must expect, and these are not to be ignored.* Still there remains a solid amount of psychological discovery for which Froebel has had as yet but little credit.

Indeed, just as his disciples have been inclined, like all disciples, to think that their master has said the last word on his own subject, so have opponents of Froebelian doctrines, irritated perhaps by these pretensions, made direct attacks on somewhat insufficient grounds. In a later chapter, an attempt has been made to deal with what seems unfounded in such attacks.†

The major part of the book, however, is intended to show the correctness of Froebel's views on points now regarded as of fundamental importance, and generally recognized as modern theories. For this purpose passages from Froebel's writings are here compared with similar passages from such undoubted authorities as Dr. James Ward, Professor Stout, Professor Lloyd Morgan, Mr. W. Macdougall, Mr. J. Irving King, and others.

In the first place, it should be noted that Froebel was fully aware of the necessity for a psychological basis for his educational theories.

Writing in 1841, he says :

“I am firmly convinced that all the phenomena of the child world, those which delight us, as well as those which grieve us, depend upon fixed laws as

* See Chapter IX. † See Chapter X.