

**THE GREAT EDUCATORS.
FROEBEL AND EDUCATION
THROUGH SELF-ACTIVITY**

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The Great Educators. Froebel and Education Through Self-Activity by H. Courthope Bowen

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EDITED BY NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER

F. W. & FROEBEL

AND

EDUCATION THROUGH SELF-ACTIVITY

BY

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PREFACE

For many years I have been a student of Froebel's principles and methods, not only in books, — Froebel's own and those written by others, — but also in actual practice in the kindergarten. My attention was first called to his system when, as headmaster of a large London school many years ago, I had occasion to notice the extra brightness and teachableness of some little boys who had been, at least partly, trained on Froebel's plan. Some years after this, when under the direction of a small band of public-spirited educational reformers, I endeavored to establish a training college for schoolmasters in secondary schools, my attention naturally was drawn with redoubled force to Froebel. The attempt failed; partly through lack of funds (one of Froebel's constant troubles), and partly through lack of support in the schools. But my four years' labor taught me many things; and amongst others it taught me to sympathize keenly with those who, in furtherance of new ideas, struggle to found educational institutions. What is more to the present purpose, however, is that during that period I learned to see clearly that Froebel's system is the only system in which the details of actual practice are the real outcome of sound psychological

10240

principles, and in their application are continuously governed by those principles. As our knowledge of psychology grows, the principles will certainly require some modification; and in consequence the practice will have to be slightly changed here and there. But if ever the practice ceases to be the distinct expression of the psychology, the plan will cease to be Froebel's.

Ever since the period I have mentioned I have been a frequent observer of kindergartens and of the children in them; and of late years I have had much to do with the examining of students who are trained to be kindergarten teachers. Naturally enough I have often been led to speak and lecture on Froebel's principles and methods, in London, at Cambridge, and elsewhere; and through the courtesy of the editor of the (London) *Journal of Education* some of my lectures have from time to time appeared in his pages. And now, again through his courtesy, I am allowed to freely use such parts of those printed lectures as seem to me useful for my present purpose. They were indeed written with the idea of their some day forming part of a book; but, as they stand in the following pages, they are much altered, added to, and abridged. The chapters of which they form parts are chaps. iii, iv, vi, and viii.

The plan which I have adopted for expounding my subject, will, no doubt, reveal almost at once a certain amount of repetition. This I am quite aware of; though I may say that the amount of repetition is not great. I have chosen this mode of treatment because I have learnt from long experience that it is

the one best suited to students. After giving a brief life of Froebel in chaps. i and ii, I plunge at once into *The Education of Man* in chap. iii, — but only to deal with such of its leading principles and views as are fundamental and at the same time are likely to offer difficulties to beginners. In chap. iv I enter more into the details of the *Mutter- und Kose-lieder*, and restate some of the principles already spoken of, but now in connection with the games and songs which the book sets forth. It is not until I come to chap. v that I attempt any complete statement of Froebel's principles and methods, as far as they refer to physical and intellectual training, — leaving the ethical training for chap. vi.

When through a long period of time one has been a constant student of some particular subject, it becomes extremely difficult to attribute to their right sources all the ideas concerning it in possession of which one happens to find oneself, — and quite out of the question if the possible sources are numerous. Besides, in common politeness to oneself one must consider some of the ideas home-grown, even though they resemble ideas to be found elsewhere. I have, however, done my best to acknowledge all conscious borrowings; and if it is to be my unhappy fate to have others brought to my consciousness later on, I apologize beforehand, and will make due reparation in other editions.

I have added two appendices at the end of the book; one giving a chronological list of Froebel's writings, and the other giving the names of such books on Froebel and his system as I myself have found valuable. To have given a complete bibliography of Froebel-