

**PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE
OF AN EDUCATIONAL
FREELANCE**

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Passages from the life of an educational freelance by William H. Herford

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WILLIAM H. HERFORD

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DR. EWALD HAUFE
"Aus dem Leben eines freien Pädagogen"

PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE
OF AN
EDUCATIONAL FREELANCE

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY
WILLIAM H. HERFORD B.A. (LOND.)
AUTHOR OF
"THE SCHOOL" AND "STUDENT'S PROBLEM"

*"Truth—once to make the whole world free,
Is naught, at first, but Heresy"*

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

ONE who reads this little book with attention, and a touch of sympathy, will observe "two streams of tendency" running through it: they might be called Revolt and Reform. At school, discontent with formal teaching, in which he sees no reason; hatred of rote-learning and mental drill, of which he sees no good come; almost sour a very sweet nature, and turn a quick, lively boy eager to know whatever can be known, and do whatever can be done, into a reserved, over quiet, almost fretful youth. Change to a freer air, to work that he understands, restores his spirits but confirms his revolt. The Teachers' college, where—according to *his* impressions—*that* is done which ought not to have been done, and *that* left undone which ought to have been done, with singular consistency, and where his own health of mind and body plainly suffered; "prepared" him for the post of elementary teacher in a poverty-stricken village, where every help and comfort

seemed absent; where nothing but love for nature and children saved him from collapse. A happy translation to another school—where for a year or more he “felt himself in Paradise”—restored the tone of his mind, and made him long to gain, by University study, scientific foundation for his ill-assorted knowledge. So he entered himself student at Jena and at Göttingen; heard several interesting lectures, and made some valuable friends; but concluded that the university system was still imperfect, while the science and art of teaching were utterly, and it seemed wilfully, neglected. On these abstract studies followed a long series of practical experiences in teaching, for his daily bread—*Brod-studien* with a vengeance!—in Italy, France, and Switzerland, as well as Germany.

These “Passages” all built up in him the strongest conviction that modern European education is everywhere on a wrong tack, and demands very radical changes. All the while he shows the surest faith in the power of education, natural and rational. He condemns whatever in Germany is called “national education,” as being the outcome of efforts of State and Church in unholy alliance, to exploit, to use, the people for the profit of the privileged classes; while he asserts with inspiring fervour that true education is the one means of saving and renewing the nation. His aim to amend is just as strong as his revolt. From his first days as assistant teacher, whatever he sees—feels—to be wrong in theory, anti-popular, inhuman—the impulse is in him to reform. All blunders, each set of unfavourable circumstances, every spoiled mind, makes him sad; but also makes

him think; intellect being as active with him as feelings are quick. Almost ignorant of Pestalozzi, save as of one whom all praise and few follow, like a Higher Master, he makes his own and applies Pestalozzi's spell—"Anschauung." He works to bring objects, Things—abstract and concrete—into actual contact with the pupil's senses and mind; putting words, names—those importunate pretenders!—into their proper subordinate place. Unconscious of F. Froebel, to a degree that shocks this translator, he takes hold of Froebel's most pregnant idea, "Learn by doing," develops the fruitful thought, and makes of it the very heart of his method. And what are his means? How did primeval man begin to be civilised? By means of Nature: how else? Nature is about us yet; and one day we shall believe that all we truly *know*—the stuff of all real knowledge—we learn from her: *all the rest*—hearsay, rote-knowledge—being *Vox et proterea nihil*. Yet we let nature be! We "touch not, taste not, handle not," and sit in close rooms to read and memorise notes and labels in crabbed script, of what is in full—outside. In these "Passages" we see Dr. Haufe continually trying to find the way back to Nature. Now he makes good a step in the right direction; gazes around him, and feels that all is not yet clear; then another step, and another; till at last he cries, with tears of joy, "I have found it," when he recognises that the one and only *end* of human education is that harmonious development of humanity, the aim after which seems to be Man's one essential distinction: perceives that the *means* of man's education is the whole of Nature; all her works and ways,