

THE CHILD AND CHILD-NATURE

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The child and child-nature by Bertha Maria Marenholtz-Bülow

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BERTHA MARIA MARENHOLTZ-BÜLOW

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BY
THE BARONESS MARENHOLTZ-BÜLOW

AUTHOR OF "HAND-WORK AND HEAD-WORK," ETC.



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AUTHORESS' PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.



PART of the following Essays have already appeared in the journal entitled "Erziehung der Gegenwart" (Berlin, Enslin, 1861, 1862), prepared by me, and edited by Karl Schmidt, Councillor of Education, which work being now out of print, a republication of the Essays may be acceptable. The remaining part has been added quite lately.

D B.

BERLIN, *May*, 1868.

AUTHORESS' PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.



THE present edition appears unaltered, and will, we hope, meet with the same reception as did the first, especially in the circle of Kindergarten teachers.

Although, since the first appearance of this work, the spread of Kindergartens may have made important progress, the same cannot be said of the understanding of Fröbel's principles

These, on the contrary, have become more and more perverted by the continually increasing number of incompetent persons who have attempted to carry them out, and need on this account renewed interpretation. It is to this end that the second edition of this work will be devoted.

D. B.

DRESDEN, *May*, 1878.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE book, of which the following pages are a translation, has for its object to promote a more thorough and universal understanding of the theories and philosophy on which Fröbel's educational system is based.

In their outward embodiment of Kindergarten schools, approaching more or less incompletely to the original conception of the founder of the system, these theories have been gaining for some time past increasing acceptance in England. But while Kindergartens are multiplying, and Kindergarten teachers are being trained in greater and greater numbers, and parents and children are rejoicing in the discovery that lessons and tears have no necessary connection with each other, there is still great and prevailing ignorance as to what is the real meaning of this educational revolution, or indeed as to whether there be any meaning in it at all, beyond the idea that it is better to make children's lessons pleasant rather than unpleasant, and that it is a good thing to teach them to use their hands.

It is a generally accepted fact that boys and girls must be educated, that is to say, must be taught to *do* certain things and *know* certain others in order that when they are grown up they may get on in the world and be like other people—or if possible superior to them. This process of education must of course begin at some time or other, and natural and artificial causes combined have resulted in the universal acknowledgment that it should begin as early in life as possible. Children, however, have always shown a perverse preference for play rather than lessons. Dolls, boxes of bricks, nursery-rhymes, &c., have invariably had a greater power of fascination for

their young minds than A B C 's and spelling-books, or the most elegantly traced pot-hooks and copy-book maxims. Most of us can remember a time when our deepest feelings were expressed in the lines :

“ Multiplication is vexation,
Division is as bad ;
The Rule of Three doth puzzle me,
And Practice drives me mad.”

And so lesson-time has been wont to be for children a time of tears and punishment and longing to have done, and, as a rule, not till the season for learning has passed do we see much desire for it.

But Fröbel has changed all this. He has not said that education should not begin so soon—on the contrary, according to him it ought to begin from the cradle—but he has said that children must not be made unhappy over their lessons, and he has given to the world a system by which he guarantees that both these ends shall be accomplished. And though some mothers are not quite sure whether their children learn what is most necessary at Kindergartens, and “get on fast enough,” and some think there is too much *system* for little children, some again that there is too much *play*, still the children are happy, and that is the chief thing.

Fröbel, however, means a great deal more than this, as will be seen by a study of the Baroness von Bulow's full and detailed exposition of his theories and philosophy. How far these are already understood in England I am not able fully to estimate, for I have had no personal experience of or connection with Kindergartens, and have not been in the way of hearing much about them ; nor, until I was asked if I would undertake the translation of this book, had I given the matter any serious attention. I certainly had very little idea myself of the way in which Fröbel had arrived at his system, or of what were the fundamental principles underlying it, and my attitude towards it was of a very uncertain nature. Whilst engaged on this translation, however, I have occasionally talked about the book to people in different ways connected with or interested in

Kindergartens, and have generally found that the essential ideas expounded in it were quite new to them—new *i.e.* in their application to the education of children.

Whether a more profound and universal comprehension of Fröbel's educational theories will at once have the effect of making Kindergartens more popular is, I think, doubtful. Those parents and teachers who have had misgivings as to the preponderance of play in this mode of education will, perhaps, be relieved to find how serious a view Fröbel took of the meaning and use of children's play; but those who have already rather inclined to find fault with the excess of systematizing, as likely to suppress all originality in children, and turn them into machines incapable of acting when the guiding hand has been removed, will possibly learn with dismay that there is even more system than they thought; and those for whom Kindergartens have as yet had no attraction, and who have been content to go on teaching and getting their children taught in old established ways, acknowledging that education is of course a very important, indeed the most important matter, and that a certain amount of method in it is undoubtedly desirable; but that even here one may go too far, and that after all those children often turn out best who are not too much looked after, &c., &c., these, doubtless, will, many of them, regard this book as a tissue of far-fetched absurdities. They may often have been perplexed by the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of knowing how far their children really understood and were benefiting by what was being taught them, and have wondered to what extent it is desirable (to some extent it is unavoidable) to store the memory with facts and ideas beyond the power of the mind to deal with and assimilate; they may often have wished that they could look into their children's minds and see clearly the processes going on there, but they will not necessarily believe Fröbel when he undertakes to lay bare those processes, and asserts that in the analogy which can be traced between the development of the individual human being and that of the race lies the clue to the insight they desire. That as mankind in its infancy had no apprehension of abstract spiritual ideas, and only took