

INTRODUCTORY.

THE year 1882 was the centenary of Froebel's birth, and in the present "plentiful lack" of faithful translations of Froebel's own words we proposed to the Froebel Society to issue a translation of the "Education of Man," which we would undertake to make at our own cost, that the occasion might be marked in a manner worthy of the English branch of the Kindergarten movement. But various reasons prevented the Society from accepting our offer, and the lamentable deficiency still continues. We have therefore endeavoured to make a beginning by the present work, consisting of Froebel's own words done into English as faithfully as we know how to render them, and accompanied with any brief explanation of our own that may be essential to the clear understanding of the passages given. We have not attempted to rewrite our author, the better to suit the practical, clear-headed, common-sense English character, but have preferred simply to present him in an English dress with his national and personal peculiarities untouched.

In so doing we are quite aware that we have sacrificed interest, for in many passages, if not in most, a careful paraphrase of Froebel would be much more intelligible and pithy to English readers than a true rendering, since he probably possesses every fault of style except over-conciseness; but we feel that it is better to let Froebel speak for himself.

For the faithfulness of translation we hope our respective nationalities may have stood us in good stead. We would, however, add that a faithful translation is not a verbal translation. The translator should rather strive to write each sentence as the author would have written it in English.

Froebel's opinions, character, and work grow so directly out of his life, that we feel the best of his writing that a student of the Kindergarten system could begin with is the important autobiographical "Letter to the Duke of Meiningen," written in the year 1827, but never completed, and in all probability never sent to the sovereign whose name it bears. That this is the course Froebel would himself have preferred will, we think, become quickly apparent to the reader. Besides, in the boyhood and the earliest experiences of Froebel's life, we find the sources of his whole educational system. That other children might be better understood than he was, that other children might have the means to live the true child-life that was denied to himself, and that by their powers being directed into the right channels, these children might become a blessing to themselves and to others, was undoubtedly in great part the motive which induced Froebel to describe so fully all the circumstances of his peculiar childhood. We should undoubtedly have a clearer comprehension of many a great reformer if he had taken the trouble to write out at length the impressions of his life's dawn, as Froebel has done. In Froebel's particular case, moreover, it is evident that although his account of himself is unfinished, we fortunately possess all that is most important for the understanding of the origin of the Kindergarten system. After the "Letter to the Duke of Meiningen," we have placed the shorter account of his life which Froebel included in a letter to the philosopher Krause. A sketch of Barop's, which varies the point of view by regarding the whole movement more in its outer aspect than even Froebel himself is able to do, seemed to us also desirable to translate; and finally we have added also a carefully prepared "chronology" extended from Lange's list. Our translation is made from the edition of Froebel's works published by Dr. Wichard Lange at Berlin in 1862.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FROEBEL.

(A LETTER TO THE DUKE OF MEININGEN.)



WAS born at Oberweissbach, a village in the Thuringian Forest, in the small principality of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, on the 21st April, 1782. My father was the principal clergyman, or pastor, there.* (He died in 1802.) I was early initiated into the conflict of life amidst painful and narrowing circumstances; and ignorance of child-nature and insufficient education wrought their influence upon me. Soon after my birth my mother's health began to fail, and after nursing me nine months she died. This loss, a hard blow to me, influenced the whole environment and development of my being: I consider that my mother's death decided more or less the external circumstances of my whole life.

The cure of five thousand souls, scattered over six or seven villages, devolved solely on my father. This work, even to a man so active as my father, who was very conscientious in the fulfilment of his duty as minister, was all-absorbing; the more so since the custom of frequent services still prevailed. Besides all this, my father had undertaken to superintend the building of a large new church, which drew him more and more from his home and from his children.

I was left to the care of the servants; but they, profiting by my father's absorption in his work, left me, fortunately for me, to my brothers, who were somewhat older than myself.† This,

* Johann Jacob Froebel, father of Friedrich, belonged to the Old Lutheran Protestant Church.

† These were four (1) August, who went into business, and died young. (2) Christoph, a clergyman in Griesheim, who died in 1813 of the typhus, which then overspread all central Germany, having broken out in the over-crowded hospitals after the battle of Leipzig; he was the father of Julius, Karl, and