

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

in addition to a circumstance of my later life, may have been the cause of that unswerving love for my family, and especially for my brothers, which has, to the present moment, been of the greatest importance to me in the conduct of my life. Although my father, for a village pastor, was unusually well informed—nay, even learned and experienced—and was an incessantly active man, yet in consequence of this separation from him during my earliest years I remained a stranger to him throughout my life; and in this way I was as truly without a father as without a mother. Amidst such surroundings I reached my fourth year. My father then married again, and gave me a second mother. My soul must have felt deeply at this time the want of a mother's love,—of parental love,—for in this year occurs my first consciousness of self. I remember that I received my new mother overflowing with feelings of simple and faithful child-love towards her. These sentiments made me happy, developed my nature, and strengthened me, because they were kindly received and reciprocated by her. But this happiness did not endure. Soon my step-mother rejoiced in the possession of a son of her own,* and then her love was not only withdrawn entirely from me and transferred to her own child, but I was treated with worse than indifference—by word and deed, I was made to feel an utter stranger.

I am obliged here to mention these circumstances, and to describe them so particularly, because in them I see the first cause of my early habit of introspection, my tendency to self-examination, and my early separation from companionship with other men. Soon after the birth of her own son, when I had

Theodor, the wish to benefit whom led their uncle Friedrich to begin his educational work in Griesheim in 1816. (3) Christian Ludwig, first a manufacturer in Osterode, and then associated with Friedrich from 1820 onwards,—born 24th June, 1770, died 9th January, 1851. (4) Traugott, who studied medicine at Jena, became a medical man, and was burgomaster of Stadt-Ilm. Friedrich August Wilhelm himself was born on the 21st April, 1782, and died on the 21st June, 1852. He had no sisters.

* Karl Poppo Froebel, who became a teacher, and finally a publisher,—born 1786; died 25th March, 1824: not to be confounded with his nephew, Karl, son of Christoph, now living in Edinburgh.

scarcely entered my boyhood, my step-mother ceased to use the sympathetic, heart-uniting "thou" in speaking to me, and began to address me in the third person, the most estranging of our forms of speech. And as in this mode of address the third person, "he," isolates the person addressed, it created a great chasm between my step-mother and me.* At the beginning of my boyhood, I already felt utterly lonely, and my soul was filled with grief.

Some coarse-minded people wished to make use of my sentiments and my mood at this time to set me against my step-mother, but my heart and mind turned with indignation from these persons, whom I thenceforth avoided, so far as I was able. Thus I became, at an early age, conscious of a nobler, purer, inner-life, and laid the foundation of that proper self-consciousness and moral pride which have accompanied me through life. Temptations returned from time to time, and each time took a more dangerous form: not only was I suspected as being capable of unworthy things, but base conduct was actually charged against me, and this in such a way as left no doubt of the impropriety of the suspicion and of the untruthfulness of the accusation. So it came to pass that in the first years of my boyhood I was perforce led to live to myself and in myself—and indeed to study my own being and inner consciousness, as opposed to external

* This needs explanation. In Germany, even by strangers, children are universally addressed in the second person singular, which carries with it a certain caressing sentiment. Grown persons would be addressed (except by members of their own family, or intimate friends) in the third person plural. Thus, if one met a child in the street, one might say, *Willst Du mit mir kommen?* (Wilt thou come with me?); whereas to a grown person the proper form would be, *Wollen Sie mit mir kommen?* (Will THEY—meaning, will YOU—come with me?). The mode of speech of which Froebel speaks here is now almost obsolete, and even in his day was only used to a person of markedly inferior position. Our sentence would run in this case, *Will Er mit mir kommen?* (Will HE—meaning, will YOU, John or Thomas—come with me?), and carries with it a sort of contemptuous superciliousness, as if the person spoken to were beneath the dignity of a direct address. It is evident, therefore, that to a sensitive, self-torturing child like Froebel, being addressed in this manner would cause the keenest pain; since, as he justly says, it has the effect, by the mere form of speech, of *isolating* the person addressed. Such a one is not to be considered as of our family, or even of our rank in life.

circumstances. My inward and my outward life were at that time, even during play and other occupations, my principal subjects for reflection and thought.

A notable influence upon the development and formation of my character was also exercised by the position of my parents' house. It was closely surrounded by other buildings, walls, hedges, and fences, and was further enclosed by an outer courtyard, a paddock, and a kitchen garden. Beyond these latter I was strictly forbidden to pass. The dwelling had no other outlook than on to the buildings to right and left, the big church in front, and at the back the sloping fields stretching up a high hill. For a long time I remained thus deprived of any distant view: but above me I saw the sky, clear and bright as we so often find it in the hill country; and around me I felt the pure fresh breeze stirring. The impression which that clear sky and that pure air then made on me has remained ever since present to my mind. My perceptions were in this manner limited to only the nearest objects. Nature, with the world of plants and flowers, so far as I was able to see and understand her, early became an object of observation and reflection to me. I soon helped my father in his favourite occupation of gardening, and in this way received many permanent perceptions; but the consciousness of the real life in nature only came to me further on, and I shall return to the point hereafter in the course of my narrative. Our domestic life at this time gave me much opportunity for occupation and reflection. Many alterations went on in our house; both my parents were exceedingly active-minded, fond of order, and determined to improve their dwelling in every possible way. I had to help them according to my capacity, and soon perceived that I thereby gained strength and experience; while through this growth of strength and experience my own games and occupations became of greater value to me.

But from my life in the open air amongst the objects of nature, and from the externals of domestic life, I must now turn to the inner aspects of my home and family.

My father was a theologian of the old school, who held knowledge and science in less estimation than faith; but yet he endeavoured to keep pace with the times. For this purpose he

subscribed to the best periodicals he could obtain, and carefully examined what information they offered him. This helped not a little to elevate and enlighten the old-fashioned truly Christian life which reigned in our family. Morning and evening all its members gathered together, and even on Sunday as well, although on that day divine service would of course also call upon us to assemble for common religious worship. Zollikofer, Hermes, Marezoll, Sturm, and others, turned our thoughts, in those delightful hours of heavenly meditation, upon our innermost being, and served to quicken, unfold, and raise up the life of the soul within us. Thus my life was early brought under the influence of nature, of useful handiwork, and of religious feelings; or, as I prefer to say, the primitive and natural inclinations of every human being were even in my case also tenderly fostered in the germ. I must mention here, with reference to my ideas regarding the nature of man, to be treated of later, and as throwing light upon my professional and individual work, that at this time I used repeatedly, and with deep emotion, to resolve to try and be a good and brave man. As I have heard since, this firm inward resolution of mine was in flagrant contrast with my outward life. I was full of youthful energy and in high spirits, and did not always know how properly to moderate my vivacity. Through my want of restraint I got into all kinds of scrapes. Often, in my thoughtlessness, I would destroy the things I saw around me, in the endeavour to investigate and understand them.

My father was prevented by his manifold occupations from himself instructing me. Besides, he lost all further inclination to teach me, after the great trouble he found in teaching me to read—an art which came to me with great difficulty. As soon as I could read, therefore, I was sent to the public village school.

The position in which my father stood to the village school-masters, that is to say, to the Cantor,* and to the master of the girls' school, and his judgment of the value of their respective

* The Cantor would combine the duties of precentor (whence his title), leading the church singing and training the choristers, with those of the schoolmaster of the village boys' school. In large church-schools the Cantor is simply the choir-master. The great Bach was Cantor of the Thomas-Schule, Leipzig.

teaching, decided him to send me to the latter. This choice had a remarkable influence on the development of my inner nature, on account of the perfect neatness, quiet, intelligence, and order which reigned in the school; nay, I may go further, and say the school was exactly suitable for such a child as I was. In proof of this I will describe my entrance into the school. At that time church and school generally stood in strict mutual relationship, and so it was in our case. The school children had their special places in church; and not only were they obliged to attend church, but each child had to repeat to the teacher, at a special class held for the purpose every Monday, some passage of Scripture used by the minister in his sermon of the day before, as a proof of attention to the service. From these passages that one which seemed most suitable to children was then chosen for the little ones to master or to learn by heart, and for that purpose one of the bigger children had during the whole week, at certain times each day, to repeat the passage to the little children, sentence by sentence. The little ones, all standing up, had then to repeat the text sentence by sentence in like manner, until it was thoroughly imprinted on their memories.

I came into school on a Monday. The passage chosen for that week was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." I heard these words every day in the calm, serious, somewhat sing-song voices of the children, sometimes repeated by one child, sometimes by the whole number. And the text made an impression upon me such as none had ever done before and none ever did after. Indeed, this impression was so vigorous and permanent, that to this day every word spoken, with the special tone and expression then given to it, is still vivid in my mind. And yet that is now nearly forty years ago! Perhaps even then the simple boy's heart felt that these words would be the foundation and the salvation of his life, bringing to him that conviction which was to become later on to the working and striving man a source of unconquerable courage, of unflinching, ever-ready, and cheerful self-sacrifice. In short, my introduction into that school was my birth into the higher spiritual life.

Here I break off my narrative to ask myself whether I dare venture to pause yet a little longer over this first period of my

life. But this was the time when the buds began to unfold on my tree of life; this was the time when my heart found its pivot-point, and when first my inner life awoke. If, then, I succeed in giving an exact description of my early boyhood, I shall have provided an important aid to the right understanding of my life and work as a man. For that reason I venture to dwell at some inordinate length on this part of my life, and the more willingly since I can pass more quickly over later periods.

It often suggests itself to me, while thus reviewing and describing my life, just as it does with teaching and education—namely, that those things which are by most men thrown aside as common and unimportant are the very things which are, as I take it, of weightiest import. In my eyes, it is always a mistake to leave a gap in the rudimentary and fundamental part of a subject. Still I know one may exhaust the patience of a reader by touching on every minute detail, before he has been permitted to glance at the whole picture and to gather its scope and object. Therefore I beg your Highness* to pass over, at all events on the first reading, anything that may appear too long and too detailed.

Against standing rules, I was received in the girls' school, on account of the position of my father as pastor of the district. For the same reason I was placed, not with the pupils of my own age, but close to the teacher, which brought me among the elder girls. I joined in their lessons as far as I could. In two subjects I was quite able to do this. First, I could read the Bible with them; and, secondly, I had to learn line by line, instead of the little texts of the younger children already spoken of, the hymns for the following Sunday's service. Of these, two especially light up the gloomy lowering dawn of my early boyhood, like two brilliant stars. They are—"Schwing dich auf, mein Herz und Geist," and "Es kostet viel ein Christ zu sein."† These hymns were hymns of life to me. I found my own little life expressed

* It will be remembered that this letter is addressed to the Duke of Meiningen.

† "Arise, my heart and spirit," and "It costs one much (it is a difficult task) to be a Christian."

therein; and they took such a hold upon me that often in later years I have found strength and support in the message which they carried to my soul. My father's home life was in complete harmony with this discipline of the school. Although divine service was held twice on Sundays, I was but very seldom allowed to miss attending each service. I followed my father's sermons with great attention, partly because I thought I found in them many allusions to his own position, profession, and life. Looking back, I consider it of no slight importance that I used to hear the service from the vestry, because I was there separated from the congregation, and could the better keep my attention from wandering.

I have already mentioned that my father belonged to the old orthodox school of theology; and in consequence the language both of his hymns and of his sermons was mystical and symbolic—a style of speech which, in more than one sense, I should call a stone-language, because it requires an overwhelming power to burst its walls, and free from this outer shell the life contained within. But what the full strength of later life seems too weak to attain, is often accomplished by the living, life-awakening, and life-giving power of some simple, thoughtful young soul, by some young spirit first unfolding its wings, busily seeking everywhere for the causes and connections of all things. Even for such a youth, the treasure is to be gained only after long examination, inquiry, and reflection. If ever I found that for which I so longingly sought, then was I filled with exceeding joy.

The surroundings amidst which I had grown up, especially those in which my first childhood was passed, had caused my senses to be much and early exercised. The pleasures of the senses were from the first, therefore, an object for the closest consideration with me. The results of this analysing and questioning habit of my early boyhood were perfectly clear and decisive, and, if not rendered into words, were yet firmly settled in my mind. I recognised that the transitory pleasures of the senses were without enduring and satisfying influence on man, and that they were therefore on no account to be pursued with too great eagerness. This conviction stamped and determined my whole being, just as my questioning examination and comparison of the

inner with the outer world, and my study of their inter-connection, is now the basis of my whole future life. Unceasing self-contemplation, self-analysis, and self-education have been the fundamental characteristics of my life from the very first, and have remained so until these latest days.

To stir up, to animate, to awaken, and to strengthen, the pleasure and power of the human being to labour uninterruptedly at his own education, has become and always remained the fundamental principle and aim of my educational work.

Great was my joy when I believed I had proved completely to my own satisfaction that I was not destined to go to hell. The stony, oppressive dogmas of orthodox theology I very early explained away, perhaps assisted in this by two circumstances. Firstly, I heard these expressions used over and over again, from my habit of being present at the lessons given by my father in our own house, in preparation for confirmation. I heard them used also in all sorts of ways, so that my mind almost unconsciously constructed some sort of explanation of them. Secondly, I was often a mute witness of the strict way in which my father performed his pastoral duties, and of the frequent scenes between him and the many people who came to the parsonage to seek advice and consolation. I was thus again constantly attracted from the outer to the inner aspects of life. Life, with its inmost motives laid bare, passed before my eyes, with my father's comments pronounced upon it; and thing and word, act and symbol were thus perceived by me in their most vivid relationship. I saw the disjointed, heavy-laden, torn, inharmonious life of man as it appeared in this community of five thousand souls, before the watchful eyes of its earnest, severe pastor. Matrimonial and sexual circumstances especially were often the objects of my father's gravest condemnation and rebuke. The way in which he spoke about these matters showed me that they formed one of the most oppressive and difficult parts of human conduct; and, in my youth and innocence, I felt a deep pain and sorrow that man alone, among all creatures, should be doomed to these separations of sex, whereby the right path was made so difficult for him to find. I felt it a real necessity for the satisfaction of

my heart and mind to reconcile this difficulty, and yet could find no way to do so. How could I at that age, and in my position? But my eldest brother, who, like all my elder brothers, lived away from home, came to stay with us for a time; and one day, when I expressed my delight at seeing the purple threads of the hazel buds, he made me aware of a similar sexual difference in plants. Now was my spirit at rest. I recognised that what had so weighed upon me was an institution spread over all nature, to which even the silent, beautiful race of flowers was submitted. From that time humanity and nature, the life of the soul and the life of the flower, were closely knit together in my mind; and I can still see my hazel buds, like angels, opening for me the great God's temple of Nature.

I now had what I needed: to the Church was added the Nature-Temple; to the religious Christian life, the life of Nature; to the passionate discord of human life the tranquil peace of the life of plants. From that time it was as if I held the clue of Ariadne to guide me through the labyrinth of life. An intimate communion with Nature for more than thirty years (although, indeed, often interrupted, sometimes for long intervals) has taught me that plants, especially trees, are a mirror, or rather a symbol, of human life in its highest spiritual relations; and I think one of the grandest and deepest fore-feelings that have ever emanated from the human soul, is before us when we read, in the Holy Scriptures, of a tree of knowledge of good and evil. The whole of Nature teaches us to distinguish good from evil; even the world of crystals and stones—though not so vividly, calmly, clearly, and manifestly as the world of plants and flowers. I said my hazel buds gave me the clue of Ariadne. Many things grew clear to me: for instance, the earliest life and actions of our first parents in Paradise, and much connected therewith.

There are yet three points touching my inner life up to my tenth year, which, before I resume the narrative of my outer life, I should like to mention here.

The folly, superstition, and ignorance of men had dared to assume then, as they have done lately, that the world would soon come to an end. My mind, however, remained perfectly tranquil, because I reasoned thus with myself firmly and de-

finitely:—Mankind will not pass from the world, nor will the world itself pass away, until the human race has attained to that degree of perfection of which it is capable on earth. The earth, Nature in its narrowest sense, will not pass away, moreover, until men have attained a perfect insight into its essence. This idea has returned to me during my life in many a varied guise, and I have often been indebted to its influence for peace, firmness, perseverance, and courage.

Towards the end of this epoch, my eldest brother, already spoken of, was at the university, and studied theology.* Philosophic criticism was then beginning to elucidate certain Church dogmas. It was therefore not very surprising that father and son often differed in opinion. I remember that one day they had a violent dispute about religion and Church matters. My father stormed, and absolutely declined to yield; my brother, though naturally of a mild disposition, flushed deep-red with excitement; and he, too, could not abandon what he had recognised as true. I was present also on this as on many other occasions, an unobserved witness, and can still see father and son standing face to face in the conflict of opinion. I almost thought I understood something of the subject in dispute; I felt as if I must side with my brother, but there seemed at the same time something in my father's view which indicated the possibility of a mutual understanding. Already I felt in a dim way that every illusion has a true side, which often leads men to cling to it with a desperate firmness. This conviction has become more and more confirmed in me the longer I have lived; and when at any time I have heard two men disputing for the truth's sake, I have found that the truth is usually to be learnt from both sides. Therefore I have never liked to take sides; a fortunate thing for me.†

Another youthful experience which also had a decided influence in forming my cast of character, was the following:—There are certain oft-repeated demands made upon the members of our

* Christoph Froebel is here meant. He studied at the University of Jena.

† In this case Froebel's usually accurate judgment of his own character seems at fault; his opinions being always most decided, even to the point of sometimes rendering him incapable of fairly appreciating the views of others.

Established Church ; such as, to enter upon the service of Christ, to show forth Christ in one's life, to follow Jesus, etc. These injunctions were brought home to me times without number through the zeal of my father as a teacher of others and a liver himself of a Christian life. When demands are made on a child which are in harmony with child nature, he knows no reluctance in fulfilling them; and as he receives them entirely and unreservedly, so also he complies with them entirely and unreservedly. That these demands were so often repeated convinced me of their intense importance; but I felt at the same time the difficulty, or indeed, as it seemed to me, the impossibility of fulfilling them. The inherent contradiction which I seemed to perceive herein threw me into great depression; but at last I arrived at the blessed conviction that human nature is such that it is not impossible for man to live the life of Jesus in its purity, and to show it forth to the world, if he will only take the right way towards it.

This thought, which, as often as it comes into my mind, carries me back even now to the scenes and surroundings of my boyhood, may have been not improbably amongst the last mental impressions of this period, and it may fitly close, therefore, the narrative of my mental development at this age. It became, later, the point whereon my whole life hinged.

From what I have said of my boyish inner life, it might be assumed that my outer life was a happy and peaceful one. Such an assumption would, however, not be correct. It seems as if it had always been my fate to represent and combine the hardest and sharpest contrasts. My outer life was really in complete contrast with my inner. I had grown up without a mother; my physical education had been neglected, and in consequence I had acquired many a bad habit. I always liked to be doing something or another, but in my clumsy way I made mistakes as to choice of materials, of time, and of place, and thus often incurred the severe displeasure of my parents. I felt this, being of a sensitive disposition, more keenly and more persistently than my parents; the more so as I felt myself generally to blame in form rather than in substance, and in my inmost heart I could see there was a point of view from whence my conduct would seem, in substance

at all events, not altogether wrong, still less blameworthy. The motives assigned to my actions were not those which actuated me, so far as I could tell; and the consciousness of being misjudged made me really what I had been believed to be before, a thoroughly naughty boy. Out of fear of punishment I hid even the most harmless actions, and when I was questioned I made untruthful answers.

In short, I was set down as wicked, and my father, who had not always time to investigate the justice of the accusations against me, remembered only the facts as they were represented to him. My neglected childhood called forth the ridicule of others; when playing with my step-brother, I was always, according to my mother, the cause of anything that went wrong. As the mind of my parents turned more and more away from me, so on my side my life became more and more separated from theirs; and I was abandoned to the society of people who, if my disposition had not been so thoroughly healthy, might have injured me even more than they did. I longed to escape from this unhappy state of things; and I considered my elder brothers fortunate in being all of them away from home. Just at this melancholy time came home my eldest brother. He appeared to me as an angel of deliverance, for he recognised amidst my many faults my better nature, and protected me against ill-treatment. He went away again after a short stay; but I felt that my soul was linked to his, thenceforth, down to its inmost depths; and indeed, after his death, this love of mine for him turned the whole course of my life.*

The boon was at last vouchsafed me, and that at my greatest need, to leave my father's house. Had it been otherwise, the flagrant contradiction between my outer and inner life must necessarily have developed the evil inclinations which had begun in earnest to fasten upon me. A new life entirely different from the former now opened before me. I was ten years and nine months old. But I pause yet another moment in the contempla-

* Froebel is alluding to his undertaking the education of his brother Christoph's sons, in November 1816, when he finally decided to devote his life to the cause of education.

tion of this period before I pass to its narration. In order to be clearly understood by your serene Highness, which is very necessary to me if I am to attain my object, I will compare, with your permission, my former life with my present. I shall endeavour to show how I trace the connection of my earlier and my later life; how my earlier life has proved for me the means of understanding my later; how, in general, my own individual life has become to me a key to the universal life, or, in short, to what I call the symbolic life and the perpetual, conditioned, and unbroken chain of existence.

Since, throughout the period which I have just described, my inner self, my life and being, my desires and endeavours, were not discerned by my parents, so is it with me now with regard to certain German Governments.* And just as my outward life then was imperfect and incomplete, through which incompleteness my inner life was misunderstood, so also now the imperfection and incompleteness of my establishment prevent people from discerning the true nature, the basis, the source, the aim and purpose, of my desires and endeavours, and from promoting them, after recognising their value, in a right princely and patriotic spirit.

The misapprehension, the oppression under which I suffered in my early years, prepared me to bear similar evils later on, and especially those which weigh upon me in the present circumstances of my life. And as I see my present private and public life and my destiny reflected in a part of my former life, just so do I read and trace the present universal life in my former individual life. Moreover, in the same way as I tried as child or boy to educate myself to be a worthy man according to those laws which God had implanted, unknown to me, within my nature, so now do I strive in the same way, according to the same laws, and

* At the time Froebel was writing this autobiographical letter (1827), and seeking thereby to enlist the Duke of Meiningen's sympathies in his work, in order to found a fresh institution at Helba, he was undergoing what was almost a persecution at Keilhau. All associations of progressive men were frowned upon as politically dangerous, and Keilhau, amongst the rest, was held in suspicion. Somewhat of this is seen in the interesting account by Barop further on ("Critical Moments at Keilhau").

by the same method, to educate the children of my country. That for which I strove as a boy, not yet conscious of any purpose, the human race now strives for with equal unconsciousness of purpose, but for all that none the less truly. The race is, however, surrounded by less favourable circumstances than those which influenced me in my boyhood.

Life in its great as well as in its small aspects, in humanity and the human race as well as in the individual (even though the individual man often wilfully mars his own existence)—life, in the present, the past, and the future, has always appeared to me as a great undivided whole, in which one thing is explained, is justified, is conditioned and urged forward by the other.

In order that, if it be possible, there should remain no obscurity whatever in my actions, thoughts, and life, I shall proceed to consider them all, down to the very latest event which has happened to me; that is, the writing-down of this statement of my life for your Highness. My life experience it is which urges me to do this; not any whim or caprice. Common worldly wisdom would challenge such a step if it were known; no one would desire to take it, no one would dare to take it. I dare it, and I do it, because my childhood has taught me that where for trust we find distrust, where for union we find division, where for belief we find doubt, there but sad fruit will come to the harvest, and a burdensome and narrow life alone can follow.

I return again to the narrative of the development of my inner and outer life.

A new existence now began for me, entirely opposed to that which I had hitherto led. An uncle on my mother's side came to visit us in this year; he was a gentle, affectionate man.* His appearance among us made a most agreeable impression upon me. This uncle, being a man of experience, may have noticed the adverse influences which surrounded me; for soon after his departure he begged my father by letter to turn me over to him entirely. My father readily consented, and towards the end of

* Herr Hoffmann, a clergyman, representing the State in Church matter for the district of Stadt-Ilm; a post somewhat analogous to that of our arch-deacon.