

Before I begin a new chapter of my career, there are yet a few things which need mention.

To know French was at that time the order of the day, and not to know it stamped a man at once as of a very low degree of culture. To acquire a knowledge of French, therefore, became one of my chief aims at the moment. It was my good fortune to obtain instruction from an unrivalled teacher of French, M. Perrault, a Frenchman by birth, who still, even though an old man, diligently worked at the study of his mother tongue, and who at the same time wrote and spoke German with elegance. I pursued the study with ardour, taking two lessons a day, because I desired to reach a certain proficiency by a given time. Slow, however, were my steps, for I was far from having a sufficient knowledge of my own tongue whereon to build a bridge that might carry me into French. I never could properly acquire what I did not fully understand in such a way that it had a living meaning for me; and so from all the genuine zeal and considerable cost which I spent over this study I gained by no means a corresponding result; but I did learn a good deal, much more even than I then knew how to turn to account. My teacher cast on one side all the usual grammatical difficulties of French study, he aimed at imparting the language as a living thing. But I with my ignorance of language could not completely follow this free method of teaching; and yet, nevertheless, I felt that the teacher had fully grasped the meaning and the method of his work, and I always enjoyed the lessons on this account. He was especially successful in accustoming my ear to the French pronunciation, always separating and reducing it to its simple sounds and tones, and never merely saying "this is pronounced like the German *p*, or *b*, or *ä*, or *ö*," etc. The best thing resulting from this course of study was the complete exposure of my ignorance of German grammar. I must do myself the justice to say that I had given myself extraordinary trouble over the works of the most celebrated German grammarians, trying to bring life and interconnection or even a logical consequence into German grammar; but I only confused myself the worse thereby. One man said one thing, another quite the reverse; and not one of all of them, as far as I could see, had educed his theories from

the life and nature of the speech itself. I turned away a second time, quite disheartened, from the German grammarians, and once more took my own road. But unfortunately the dry forms of grammar had, quite against my own will, stuck like scales over my eyes, dimming my perceptions; I could find no means to rid myself of them, and they wrought fatally upon me now and long afterwards. The more thoroughly I knew them the more they stiffened and crushed me.

My departure from the school was now arranged, and I could let my mind pursue its development free and unshackled. As heretofore, so now also, my kindly fate came lovingly to my help: I can never speak of it with sufficient thankfulness. The three lads to whom I had hitherto given private instruction in arithmetic and language now needed a tutor, as their former tutor was leaving them. The confidential charge was laid upon me, because I of all men best knew their nature and its needs, of seeking out some fit teacher and educator for them from amongst my acquaintance. As for myself this tutor business lay far from my own thoughts, and I therefore looked round me in every direction, and with all earnestness, for some one else. Amongst others I applied to my eldest brother, telling him my views as to the necessary requirements of a true educator.

My brother wrote back very decidedly and simply, that he could not propose any one to me as a teacher and educator who would fulfil the requirements I had set forth, and further, he did not think I should ever be able to find such a person; for if one should be found possessing ample knowledge and experience of life in its external aspects, he would be deficient in a vigorous inner life of his own, and in the power to recognise and foster it in himself and his pupils; and, on the other hand, another man who might have this power would be deficient in the first-named (practical) qualities. I reported the result of my labours. It caused much disappointment, indeed it could not be otherwise, because the welfare of the children was really sought, in all love and truth, and the highest and best obtainable at that day was desired on their behalf. The family did not venture to press the post upon me personally, knowing my love of freedom and independence.

So stood matters for several months. At last, moved by my

earnest affection for the lads, and by my care to deserve the confidence with which their mother had entrusted to my hands the provision for their education, I endeavoured to look at things from the point of view of their parents. This brought me at last to the determination to become myself the educator and teacher of the lads. After a hard struggle with myself, the hardest and most exhausting I had undergone for a long time, I made known my decision. It was thankfully received, and understood quite in the spirit which had actuated me in forming it.

I communicated my decision to Gruner, with whom I still kept in the friendliest relation. He looked at me with downright astonishment, and said, "You will lose all hopes of the position you have so long sought and waited for." I replied that I should protect myself as to my position and my relations with others by a very definite written contract. To which the man of experience retorted, "Certainly, and everything will be punctually fulfilled, so that you cannot say that any one condition of all those you stood out so firmly for has failed to be observed; nevertheless you will find you will lose on all points." So spake experienced shrewdness, and what had I to set against it? I spoke of the educational necessities and wants of these children. "Good," said he, "then you will leave your own educational necessities and your own wants out of the question?" How it mortified me, that worldly wisdom should be able to speak thus, and that I was unable to controvert it! We talked no more about the matter.

And keen as was the internal conflict over this decision and this resolve of mine, equally keen was the external contest which I had to wage in entering on my new post.

There were, namely, two immutable conditions in our agreement. One was that I should never be compelled to live in town with my pupils, and that when I began my duties my pupils should be handed over entirely to my care, without any restriction; that they should follow me into the country, and there form a restricted and perfectly isolated circle, and that when they returned to town life my duties as preceptor should be at an end. The time for beginning my new career drew nigh. As the stipulated dwelling for myself and my pupils was not yet ready,

I was expected to take up my abode, for a few days, with my pupils in their town house. But I felt that it was clear that the least want of firmness at the outset would endanger my whole educational plan; therefore, I stood firm, and indeed gained my point, though at the price of being called headstrong, self-willed, and stubborn. That my assumption of my post was attended with a sharp contest was a very good and wholesome discipline for me. It was the fitting inauguration of a position and a sphere of work which was henceforth to be attended, for me, with perpetual and never-ending strife.

But as to this family and all its members, my earnest unbending maintenance of my resolve had a most wholesome effect upon them, even to winning in the end their comprehension and approval, though this was later and long after I had quitted the situation. It was ten or eleven years afterwards—that is, four or five years after my departure—that the mother of these lads expressed her entire approval of the adamant perseverance I had exhibited in my convictions.

I entered my new sphere of educational work in July 1807. I was twenty-five years old, as far as years went, but younger by several years in regard to the development of my character. I neither felt myself so old as I was, nor indeed had I any conception or realisation of my age. I was only conscious of the strength and striving of my life, the extent of my mental culture, the circumstances of my experience in the world, and especially of—what shall I call it?—the shiftlessness and undeveloped state of my culture as far as its helplessness with the external world was concerned, of my ignorance of life both as to what it really was, and how it showed in its outer aspect. The state of my culture was such as only to serve to plunge me into conflict, through the contradiction and opposition in which I found myself henceforward with all existing methods; and consequently the whole period of my tutorial career was one continual contest.

It was a salutary thing for me that this was my appointed lot from the very beginning. Now and later on I was therefore able to say to myself by way of consolation and encouragement: "You knew beforehand just how it would be." Still, unpleasantness seldom arrives in exactly the manner expected, and the unex-

pected is always the hardest to bear. Thus it was with me in this case; my situation seemed to contain insurmountable difficulties. I sought the basis for them in imperfect culture; and the cause of the disconnected nature of the culture I had been able to attain, lay, so I perceived, in the interruptions which marred my university career. Educator and teacher, however, I had determined to become and to remain; and as far as I could know my own feelings and my own powers, I must and would work out my profession in an independent free fashion of my own, founded on the view of man and his nature and relationships which had now begun to dawn upon me. Yet every man finds it above all things difficult to understand himself, and especially hard was it in my own case. I began to think that I must look for help outside myself, and seek to acquire from others the knowledge and experience I needed.

And thus there came to me once again the idea of fitting myself by continuing my university studies to become founder, principal, and manager of an educational establishment of my own. But the fact was to be considered that I had turned away from the educational path on which I had entered. Now, when the imperfection of my training pressed itself upon me, I not only sought help from Nature as of old, that school allotted to me by fate, but I turned also for assistance to my fellow-men who had divided out the whole field of education and teaching into separate departments of science, and had added to these the assistance of a rich literature. This need of help so troubled and oppressed me, and threw my whole nature into such confusion, that I resolved, as soon as might be, once more to proceed to one of the universities, and necessarily, therefore, to relinquish as speedily as possible my occupation as an educator.

As I always discussed everything important with my brother, I wrote to him on this occasion as usual, telling him of my plans and of my resolve. But for this time, at least, my nature was able to work out its difficulty without his help. I soon came to see that I had failed to appreciate my position, and had misunderstood myself; and, therefore, before I had time to get an answer from my brother to my first letter I wrote to him again, telling him that my university plans had been given up, and that my

fixed resolve now was to remain at my post. He rejoiced doubly at my decision, because this time he would have been unable to agree with me.*

No sooner had I firmly come to my decision than I began to apply my thoughts vigorously to the subjects of education and instruction. The first thing that absorbed me was the clear conviction that to educate properly one must share the life of one's pupil. Then came the questions, "What is elementary education? and of what value are the educational methods advocated by Pestalozzi? Above all, what is the purpose of education?"

In answering the question, "What is the purpose of education?" I relied at that time upon the following observations: Man lives in a world of objects, which influence him, and which he desires to influence; therefore he ought to know these objects in their nature, in their conditions, and in their relations with each other and with mankind. Objects have form, measurement, and number.

By the expression, "the external world," at this time I meant only Nature; my life was so bound up in natural objects that I altogether passed by the productions of man's art or manufacture. Therefore for a long time it was an effort to me to regard man's handiwork, with Pestalozzi's scholars, Tobler and Hopf, as a proper subject for elementary culture, and it broadened my inward and outward glance considerably when I was able to look upon the world of the works of man as also part of the "external world." In this way I sought, to the extent of such powers as I consciously possessed at that time, to make clear the meaning of all things through man, his relations with himself, and with the external world.

The most pregnant thought which arose in me at this period was this: All is unity, all rests in unity, all springs from unity, strives for and leads up to unity, and returns to unity at last. This striving in unity and after unity is the cause of the several aspects of human life. But between my inner vision and my outer perception, presentation, and action was a great gulf fixed.

* He would have refused to countenance Froebel's throwing up his engagement.

Therefore it seemed to me that everything which should or could be required for human education and instruction must be necessarily conditioned and given, by virtue of the very nature of the necessary course of his development, in man's own being, and in the relationships amidst which he is set. A man, it seemed to me, would be well educated, when he had been trained to care for these relationships and to acknowledge them, to master them and to survey them.

I worked hard, severely hard, during this period, but both the methods and the aims of education came before me in such an incoherent heap, so split up into little fragments, and so entirely without any kind of order, that during several years I did not make much progress towards my constant purpose of bringing all educational methods into an orderly sequence and a living unity. As my habitual and therefore characteristic expression of my desires then ran, I longed to see, to know, and to show forth, all things in inter-connection.

For my good fortune, however, there came out about that time certain educational writings by Seiler,* Jean Paul,† and others. They supported and elevated me, sometimes by their concurrence with my own views, expressed above, sometimes by the very contrary.

The Pestalozzian method I knew, it is true, in its main principles, but not as a living force, satisfying the needs of man. What especially lay heavy upon me at this time, however, painfully felt by myself though not apparent to my pupils, was the utter absence of any organised connection between the subjects of education. Joyful and unfettered work springs from the conception of all things as one whole, and forms a life and a lifework

* Georg Friedrich Seiler (1733-1807), a Bavarian by birth, became a highly-esteemed clergyman in Coburg. He wrote on religious and moral subjects, and those amongst the list of his works, the most likely to be alluded to by Froebel, are "A Bible for Teachers," "Methods of Religious Teaching for Schools," "Religious Culture for the Young," etc.

† Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (1763-1825). No doubt the celebrated "Levana," Richter's educational masterpiece, which was published in this same year, 1807, is here alluded to.

in harmony with the constitution of the universe and resting firmly upon it.

That this was the true education I soon felt fervently convinced, and so my first educational work consisted merely in being with my pupils and influencing them by the power of my life and work; more than this I was not at all in a position to give.

Oh, why is it that man knows so ill and prizes so little the blessings that he possesses for the first time?

When I now seek to make myself clear as to the proper life and work of an educator, my notes of that time rise fresh and fair to meet me. I look back from now into that childhood of my teacher's life, and learn from it; just as I look back into the childhood of my man's life, and survey that, and learn from that, too. Why is all childhood and youth so full of wealth and so unconscious of it, and why does it lose it without knowing it only to learn what it possessed when it is for ever lost? Ought this always to be so? Ought it to be so for every child, for every youth? Will not a time come at last, come perhaps soon, when the experience, the insight, the knowledge of age, and wisdom herself, shall build up a defence, a shelter, a protection for the childhood of youth? Of what use to mankind is the old man's experience and the greybeard's wisdom when they sink into the grave with their possessors?

At first my life and my work with my pupils was confined within narrow limits. It consisted in merely living, lounging, and strolling in the open air, and going for walks. Although I was disgusted with the methods of town education, I did not yet venture to convert life amidst Nature into an educational course. That was taught me by my young pupils themselves; and as from the circumstances of my own culture I eagerly fostered to my utmost every budding sense for Nature that showed itself, there soon developed amongst them a life-encompassing, life-giving, and life-raising enjoyment of natural objects. In the following year* this way of life was further enhanced by the father giving his sons a piece of meadowland for a garden, at the cultivation of which we

* 1808.

accordingly worked in common. The greatest delight of my pupils was to make little presents of the produce of their garden to their parents and also to me. How their eyes would gleam with pleasure when they were fortunate enough to be able to accomplish this. Pretty plants and little shrubs from the fields, the great garden of God, were transplanted by us to the children's gardens, and there carefully tended. Great was the joy, especially of the two younger ones, when such a colonist frankly enrolled himself amongst the citizens of the state. From this time forth my own childhood no longer seemed wasted. I acknowledged how entirely different a thing is the cultivation of plants, to one who has watched them and studied them in all the stages of their own free development, from what it is to one who has always stood aloof from Nature.

And here already, living cheerfully and joyfully in the bosom of Nature with my first pupils, I began to tell myself that the training of natural life was closely akin to the training of human life. For did not those gifts of flowers and plants express appreciation and acknowledgment of the love of parents and teacher? Were they not the outcome of the characteristic lovingness and the enthusiastic thankfulness of childhood? A child that of its own accord and of its own free will seeks out flowers, cares for them, and protects them, so that in due time he can weave a garland or make a nosegay with them for his parents or his teacher, can never become a bad child, a wicked man. Such a child can easily be led towards love, towards thankfulness, towards recognition of the fatherliness of God, who gives him these gifts and permits them to grow that he, as a cheerful giver in his turn, may gladden with them the hearts of his parents.

That time of conflict contained within it an element of special and peculiar meaning to myself. It brought before me my past life in its many various stages of development; and especially the chief events which had formed and influenced it, with their causes and their effects. And it always seemed to me of particular importance to go back upon the very earliest occurrences in my life. But of the actual matters of fact of my earliest years very few traces now remained; for my mother, who could have kept them in her memory for me, and from whom I could now have

learnt them, had died even before my life had really awakened. Amongst the few relics remaining to me was a written address from my godmother (the so-called Baptismal Letter), which she had sent me immediately after my baptism, according to the Thuringian custom of the time, as a sort of portion or dowry for my entrance into life. It had come into my possession after the death of my father. This letter, of a simple, Christian, tenderly religious, womanly soul, expressed in plain and affecting terms the true relation of the young Christian to that to which by his baptism he had become bound. Through these words the inner life of both mind and soul, of my boyhood and of my youth, was brought before me with all its peace and blessedness; and I could not help seeing how much that I then longed for had since come to pass. My soul, upon this thought, regained that original inspiring, enlightening, and quickening unity of which I stood so much in need. But at the same time all the resolutions of my boyhood and youth also rushed back upon me, and made it manifest how much more had yet to happen before they, too, were accomplished; and with them they brought the memory of those types and ideals with which the feeble boyish imagination had sought to strengthen itself. But my life had been far too much an inward and strictly personal life to have been able, or even to have dared to stand forth in any outwardly definite form, or to take any fixed relation to other lives, except in matters of feeling and intelligence. Indeed the power of manifesting myself properly was a very late accomplishment with me, and was, in fact, not gained until long after the recommencement of my present educational work.* I cannot now remember, during all the time of this educational work, that my personal life stood out in any way from the usual ordinary existence of men; but before I can speak with certainty upon this point I must procure information as to the circumstances of my earlier life. This much is clear, that my life at the time I am speaking of has remained in my memory only in its general ordinary human aspect. It is true, however, that then, as always

* This is in 1827. But the expression of his thought remained a difficult matter with Froebel to the end of his life, a drawback to which many of his friends have borne witness; for instance, Madame von Marenholtz-Bülow.

in my later life, it was and ever has been very difficult to me to separate in thought my inner life from my outer, and to give definite form and outward expression to the inner life, especially as to religious matters.

I dare not deny, that although the definite religious forms of the Church reached my heart readily both by way of the emotions and by sincere conviction, and cleansed and quickened me, yet I have always felt great reluctance to speak of these definite religious forms with others, particularly with pupils and students. I could never make them so clear and living to a simple healthy soul as they were to myself. From this I conclude that the naturally trained child requires no definite Church forms, because the lovingly-fostered, and therefore continuously and powerfully-developed human life, as well as the untroubled child-life also, is and must be in itself a Christian life. I further conclude that a child to whom the deeper truths of life or of religion were given in the dogmatic positive forms of Church creeds would imperatively need when a young man to be surrounded by pure and manly lives, whereby those rigid creeds might be illuminated and quickened into life. Otherwise the child runs great danger of casting away his whole higher life along with the dogmatic religious forms which he has been unable to assimilate. There, indeed, is the most elevated faith to be found, where form and life work towards a whole, shed light upon each other, and go side by side in a sisterly concord, like the inward life with the outward life, or the special with the universal.

But I must return from this long digression, and resume the account of my life and work as an educator.

Bodily exercises were as yet unknown to me in their educational capacity. I was acquainted only with jumping over a cord and with walking on stilts through my own boyish practice therein. As they fell into no relation with our common life, neither with the pursuits and thoughts of my pupils nor with my own, we regarded them purely as childish games.

What the year brings to a man in the season when Nature lies clear and open before him, that it does not bring to him in the season when Nature is more often locked away from his gaze. And as the two seasons bring diverse gifts, so do they require

diverse things in return. In the latter part of the year, when man is perforce driven more upon himself, his occupations should take on more narrowly personal characteristics. Just as the winter's life with nature is more fixed and narrowed, so also is the winter's life with men; therefore, a boy's life at this time needs material of some definite fashion, or needs fashionless material which can be shaped into definite fashion. My pupils soon came to me, urged by this new necessity. What life requires that life provides, wherever life is or has been; what youth requires that youth provides, wherever youth is or has been. And what the later man's life requires from a man, or from men in general, that also is provided by the boy's life and the youth's life when these have been genuinely lived through. The demand of my pupils set me upon the following question: "What did you do as a boy? What happened to you to satisfy that need of yours for something to do and to express? By what, at the same period of your life, was this need most fully met, or what did you then most desire for this purpose?" Then there came to me a memory from out my earliest boyhood, which yielded me all I wanted in my emergency. It was the easy art of impressing figures and forms by properly arranged simple strokes on smooth paper.* I have often made use of this simple art in my later life, and have never found it fail in its object; and on this occasion, too, it faithfully served my pupils and me, for our skill, at first weak both on the part of teacher and pupil, grew rapidly greater with use.

From these forms impressed upon paper we rose to making forms out of paper itself, and then to producing forms in paste-board, and finally in wood. My later experience has taught me much more as to the best shapes and materials for the study of forms,† of which I shall speak in its proper place.

I must, however, permit myself to dwell a little upon this extremely simple occupation of impressing forms on paper, because at the proper age it quite absorbs a boy, and completely

* Probably done with the point of a knitting needle, etc. The design is then visible on the other side of the paper in an embossed form.

† This account is dated 1827, it is always necessary to remember.

fills and contents the demands of his faculties. Why is this? It gives the boy, easily and spontaneously, and yet at the same time imperceptibly, precise, clear, and many-sided results due to his own creative power.

Man is compelled not only to recognise Nature in her manifold forms and appearances, but also to understand her in the unity of her inner working, of her effective force. Therefore he himself follows Nature's methods in the course of his own development and culture, and in his games he imitates Nature at her work of creation. The earliest natural formations, the fixed forms of crystals, seem as if driven together by some secret power external to themselves; and the boy in his first games gladly imitates these first activities of nature, so that by the one he may learn to comprehend the other. Does not the boy take pleasure in building, and what else are the earliest fixed forms of Nature but built-up forms? However, this indication that a higher meaning underlies the occupation and games which children choose out for themselves must for the present suffice. And since these spontaneous activities of children have not yet been thoroughly thought out from a high point of view, and have not yet been regarded from what I might almost call their cosmical and anthropological side, we may from day to day expect some philosopher to write a comprehensive and important book about them.* From the love, the attention, the continued interest and the cheerfulness with which these occupations are plied by children other important considerations also arise, of quite a different character.

A boy's game necessarily brings him into some wider or fuller relationship, into relationship with some more elevated group of

* After all, the work was left to Froebel himself to do. These words were written in 1827. The "Menschen Erziehung" of Froebel ("Education of Man"), which appeared the year before, had also touched upon the subject. It was further developed in his "Mutter und Koselieder" ("Mother's Songs and Games"), in which his first wife assisted him. That appeared in 1838. In the same year was also founded the *Sonntags-Blatt* (*Sunday Journal*), to which many essays and articles on this subject were contributed by Froebel. The third volume ("Pädagogik") of Dr. Wichard Lange's complete edition of Froebel's works is largely made up of these *Sonntags-Blatt* articles. The whole Kindergarten system rests mainly on this higher view of children's play.

ideas. Is he building a house?—he builds it so that he may dwell in it like grown-up people do, and have just such another cupboard, and so forth, as they have, and be able to give people things out of it just as they do. And one must always take care of this: that the child who receives a present shall not have his nature cramped and stunted thereby; according to the measure of how much he receives, so much must he be able to give away. In fact, this is a necessity for a simple-hearted child. Happy is that little one who understands how to satisfy this need of his nature, to give by producing various gifts of his own creation! As a perfect child of humanity, a boy ought to desire to enjoy and to bestow to the very utmost, for he dimly feels already that he belongs to the whole, to the universal, to the comprehensive in Nature, and it is as part of this that he lives; therefore, as such would he accordingly be considered and so treated. When he has felt this, the most important means of development available for a human being at this stage has been discovered. With a well-disposed child at such a time nothing has any value except as it may serve for a common possession, for a bond of union between him and his beloved ones. This aspect of the child's character must be carefully noticed by parents and by teachers, and used by them as a means of awakening and developing the active and presentative side of his nature; wherefore none, not even the simplest gifts from a child, should ever be suffered to be neglected.

To sketch my first attempt as an educator in one phrase, I sought with all my powers to give my pupils the best possible instruction, and the best possible training and culture, but I was unable to fulfil my intentions, to attain my end, in the position I then occupied, and with the degree of culture to which I had myself attained.

As soon as this had become fully evident to me, it occurred to my mind that nothing else could be so serviceable to me as a sojourn for a time with Pestalozzi. I expressed my views on this head very decidedly, and accordingly, in the summer of 1808, it was agreed that I should take my three pupils with me to Yverdon.

So it soon afterwards came about I was teacher and scholar, educator and pupil, all at the same time.