

This ends the autobiographical part of the Krause letter. Here and there in the footnotes the present editors, profound admirers of the great master, have ventured to criticise frankly the inordinate belief in himself which was at once Froebel's strength, and his weakness. On the one hand, his noble and truly gigantic efforts were only made possible by his almost fanatical conviction in his principles and in his mission. On the other hand, this dogmatic attitude made it very difficult to work with him, for persons of any independence of mind. He could scarcely brook discussion, never contradiction. This is most characteristically shown by a fragment of Froebel's dated 1st April, 1829, as follows:—

"I consider my own work and effort as *unique* in all time, as *necessary* in itself, and as the *messenger of reformation* for all ages, working forwards and backwards, offering and giving to mankind all that it needs, and all that it perpetually seeks on every side. I have no complaint to make if others think otherwise about it; I can bear with them; \* I can even, if need be, live with them, and this I have actually done; but I can share no life-aim with them, they and I have no *unity* of purpose in life. It is not I, it is they who are at fault herein; I do not separate myself from them, they withdraw themselves from me."

To get a view of Froebel's work from the practical side, so as to supplement the account we have received from Froebel himself as to the origination and development of the principles upon which that work was based, we have selected a sketch by Barop entitled "Critical Moments in the Froebel Community;" written for Dr. Lange's edition by Barop (then the principal and proprietor of Keilhau) about the year 1862.

\* He always regarded himself as perfectly tolerant.

## CRITICAL MOMENTS IN THE FROEBEL COMMUNITY.

**U**NDER this heading Barop writes as follows:—

About 1827 we were in an unusually critical position. You know how little means we had when we began to create our Institution.\* Middendorff had sacrificed his entire inheritance from his father, but the purchase of the ground and the erection of necessary buildings called for considerable sums, so that Middendorff's addition to the capital had disappeared like drops of water falling on a hot stone. My father-in-law, Christian Ludwig Froebel, had later on come forward and placed his entire fortune unconditionally in the hands of his brother,† but even this sacrifice was not sufficient to keep away care and want from the door. My own father was a man of means, but he was so angry at my joining the Froebel community at Keilhau ‡ that he refused me any assistance whatever. Mistrust surrounded us on all sides in these early years of our work; open and concealed enmities assailed us both from near and far, and sought to embitter our lot and to nip our efforts in the bud. None the less for this, the institution blossomed quick and fair; but later on, through the well-known persecution directed against associations of students, it was brought to the verge of ruin, for the spirit of 1815 was incarnate within it, and it was this spirit which at the time (about 1827) was the object of the extremest irritation.§ It

\* Froebel moved from Griesheim to Keilhau in 1817.

† In 1820.

‡ It was in 1828 that Barop formally and definitely joined the Froebel community.

§ The long turmoil of the Napoleonic wars, the outcome of the French Revolution, ceased in 1815; and the minds of the students and the other youths of the country, set free from this terrible struggle for liberty, turned towards the

would carry me too far were I to attempt to give a complete account of these things. At times it really seemed as if the devil himself must be let loose against us. The number of our pupils sank to five or six, and as the small receipts dwindled more and more, so did the burden of debt rise higher and higher till it reached a giddy height. Creditors stormed at us from every side, urged on by lawyers who imbrued their hands in our misery. Froebel would run out at the back door and escape amongst the hills whenever dunning creditors appeared. Middendorff, and he alone, generally succeeded in quieting them, a feat which might seem incredible to all but those who have known the fascination of Middendorff's address. Sometimes quite moving scenes occurred, full of forbearance, trustfulness, and noble sentiment, on the part of workmen who had come to ask us for their money. A locksmith, for instance, was strongly advised by his lawyer to "bring an action against the scamps," from whom no money was to be got, and who were evidently on the point of failure. The locksmith indignantly repudiated the insult thus levelled against us, and replied shortly that he had rather lose his hard-earned money than hold a doubt as to our honourable conduct, and that nothing was further from his thoughts than to increase our troubles. Ah! and these troubles were hard to bear, for Middendorff had already married, and I followed his example. When I proposed for my wife, my future father-in-law and mother-in-law\* said, "You surely will not remain longer in Keilhau?" I answered, "Yes! I do intend to remain here. The idea for which we live seems to me to be in harmony with the spirit of the age, and also of deep importance in itself; and I have no doubt but that men will come to believe in us because of our right understanding of this idea, in the same way that we ourselves believe in the invisible." As a matter of fact, none of us have ever swerved one instant from the fullest belief in our educational mission, and the most critical dilemma in the times we have

---

reformation of their own country. Many associations were formed: perhaps here and there wild talk was indulged in. The Government grew alarmed, and though the students had invariably acted with perfect legality, all their associations were dispersed and forbidden.

\* Christian Froebel and his wife.

passed through has never revealed one single wavering soul in this little valley.

When our distress had risen to its highest pitch, a new and unexpected prospect suddenly revealed itself.\* Several very influential friends of ours spoke to the Duke of Meiningen of our work. He summoned Froebel to him, and made inquiries as to his plans for the future. Froebel laid before him a plan for an educational institute,† complete in every particular, which we had all worked at in common to draw up, in which not only the ordinary "learned" branches of education but also handicrafts, such as carpentering, weaving, bookbinding, tilling the ground and so on were used as means of culture. During half the school hours studies were to be pursued, and the other half was to be occupied by handiwork of one kind or another. This work was to give opportunities for direct instruction; and above all it was so planned as to excite in the mind of the child a necessity for explanations as well as to gratify his desire for creativeness and for practical usefulness. The awakening of this eager desire for learning and creative activity, was one of the fundamental thoughts of Friedrich Froebel's mind. The object-teaching of Pestalozzi seemed to him not to go far enough; and he was always seeking to regard man not only as a receptive being, but a creative, and especially as a productive one. We never could work out our ideas in Keilhau satisfactorily, because we could not procure efficient technical teaching; and before all things we wanted the pupils themselves. But now by the help of the Duke of Meiningen our keenest hopes seemed on the point of gratification. The working out of the plan spoken of above, led us to many practical constructions in which already lay the elements of the future Kindergarten occupations. These models are now scattered far and wide, and indeed are for the most part lost; but the written plan has been preserved.

The Duke of Meiningen was much pleased with Froebel's explanations of this plan, and with the complete and open-hearted

---

\* This was 1827-29.

† This is the interesting plan of the Public Educational Institution and Orphanage in Helba, with which admirers of Froebel are probably already well acquainted. It is given in full in Lange's "Froebel," vol. i., p. 401.

way in which everything was laid before him. A proposition was now made that Froebel should receive the estate of Helba with thirty acres of land, and a yearly subsidy of 1,000 florins.\* In passing it may be noticed that Froebel was consulted by the duke as to the education of the hereditary prince. Froebel at once said outright that no good would be done for the future ruler if he were not brought up in the society of other boys. The duke came to his opinion, and the prince was actually so taught and brought up.

When Froebel came back from Meiningen† the whole community was naturally overjoyed; but their joy did not last very long. A man of high station in Meiningen who was accustomed to exercise a sort of dictatorship in educational matters, as he was the right-hand man of the prince in such things, a man also who had earned an honourable place in literature (of which no one surely would seek to deprive him), feared much lest the elevation of Froebel should injure his own influence. We were therefore, all of a sudden, once again assailed with the meanest and most detestable charges, to which our unfortunate position at Keilhau lent a convenient handle. The duke received secret warnings against us. He began to waver, and in a temporising way sent again to Froebel, proposing that he should first try a provisional establishment of twenty pupils as an experiment. Froebel saw the intention in the duke's mind, and was thrown out of humour at once; for when he suspected mistrust he lost all hope, and immediately cast from his mind what a few hours before had so warmly encouraged him. Therefore Froebel at once broke off all negotiations, and set out for Frankfurt, to discuss the work at Keilhau with his friends; since after so many troubles he had almost begun to lose faith in himself. Here by chance he met the well-known musical composer Schnyder, from Wartensee. He told this gentleman of the events which had just occurred, talked to him of his plans and of our work at Keilhau, and exercised upon him that overpowering influence which is the peculiar property of creative minds.

\* Say £100.

† In 1829.

Schnyder saw the value of his efforts, and begged him to set up an educational establishment in his castle on the Wartensee, in Switzerland.\* Froebel hurriedly seized with joy the hand thus held out to him, and at once set off for Wartensee with his nephew, my brother-in-law Ferdinand.

There Friedrich and Ferdinand Froebel had already been living and working some little time when I was asked by the rest of the community who still remained at Keilhau to go and see for myself exactly how they were getting on in Switzerland. With ten thalers † in my pocket, and in possession of one old summer coat, which I wore, and a threadbare frock-coat, which I carried over my arm, I set off on "Shanks's mare" ‡ to travel the whole way. If I were to go into details as to what I went through on that journey, I should probably run the risk of being charged with gross exaggeration. Enough, I got to my destination, and when I asked in the neighbourhood about my friends and their doings, I learned from every one that there was nothing further to say against "the heretics," than that they were heretics. A few peasant children from the neighbourhood had found their way to them, but no one came to them from any distance, as had been reckoned upon from the first by Froebel as a source of income. The ill-will of the clergy, which began to show itself immediately the institution was founded, and which became stronger as the footing of our friends grew firmer, was able to gather to itself a following sufficient to check any quick growth of our undertaking. Besides, the basis for such an establishment was not to be found at Wartensee. Schnyder had, indeed, with a generosity never too greatly to be admired and praised, made over to us his castle and all its furniture, his plate, his splendid library,—in short, all that was in or around the castle was fully at our disposition; but he would permit no new buildings or alterations of any sort, and as the rooms assigned to us were in no way suitable for our use, it was evident that his generous support must be regarded as only a temporary and passing assistance. We perceived the evil

\* The Wartensee is a small lake in the canton Luzern, not far from Sempach.

† About 30s.

‡ Auf Schuster's Rappen,—*i.e.*, on foot. (This was in 1832.)

of our situation in all its keenness, but we saw no way out of the difficulty.

In a most remarkable way there dawned upon us a new prospect at the very moment when we least expected it. We were sitting one day in a tavern near Wartensee, and talking of our struggles with some strangers who happened to be there. Three travellers were much interested in our narrative. They gave themselves out as business people from Willisau,\* and soon informed us that they had formed the notion of trying to get some assistance for us, and our enterprise for their native town. This they actually did. We received an invitation from twenty associated well-to-do families in Willisau to remove our school there, and more fully to work out our plans amongst them. The association had addressed the cantonal authorities, and a sort of castle was allotted provisionally to us. About forty pupils from the canton at once entered the school, and now we seemed at last to have found what we had so long been seeking. But the priests rose up furiously against us with a really devilish force. We even went in fear of our lives, and were often warned by kind-hearted people to turn back, when we were walking towards secluded spots, or had struck along the outlying paths amongst the mountains. To what abominable means this spirit of bigotry resorted, the following example may serve to show.

In Willisau a church festival is held once a year, in which a communion-wafer is shown, miraculously spotted with blood. The drops of blood were believed by the people to have been evoked from the figure of Jesus by the crime of two gamblers; who, having cursed Jesus, flung their sword at him, whereupon the devil appeared. As "God be with us"† seized the villains by the throat, a few drops of blood trickled from Jesus' wounds. To prevent others, therefore, from falling in a like way into the power of the arch-deceiver, a yearly commemorative festival is held at Willisau. The wafer is shown as a warning to devout

\* A small town not far away, still in the canton Luzern.

† This was a familiar name for the devil, till a few years back, in Germany; surprisingly recalling the term "Eumenides" for the Greek Furies, since it originated in a desire to speak of so powerful an enemy in respectful terms, lest he should take offence.

people, who flock in crowds from all parts of the neighbourhood to join in the procession which closes the ceremony. We felt of course compelled to attend, and as we wished to take our part, we offered to lead the singing. I feared an outbreak, and I earnestly implored my friends to keep quiet under any circumstances, and whatever happened, to give no pretext for any excitement. Our singing was finished, when in the place of the expected preacher, suddenly there appeared a blustering, fanatical Capuchin monk. He exhausted himself in denunciations of this God-forsaken, wicked generation, sketched in glaring colours the pains of hell awaiting the accursed race, and then fell fiercely upon the alarmed Willisauers, upbraiding them, as their worst sin, with the fostering of heretics in their midst, the said "heretics" being manifestly ourselves. Fiercer and fiercer grew his threats, coarser and coarser his insults against us and our well-wishers, more and more horrible his pictures of the flames of hell, into grave danger of which the Willisauers, he said, had fallen by their awful sin. Froebel stood as if benumbed, without moving a muscle, or changing a feature, exactly in face of the Capuchin, in amongst the people; and we others also looked straight before us, immovable. The parents of our pupils, as well as the pupils themselves, and many others, had already fled midway in the monk's Jeremiad. Every one expected the affair to end badly for us; and our friends, outside the church, were taking precautions for our safety, and concerting measures for seizing the monk who was thus inciting the mob to riot. We stood quite still all the time in our places listening patiently to the close of the Capuchin's tirade: "Win, then, for yourselves an everlasting treasure in heaven," shouted he, "bring this misery to an end, and suffer the wretched men to remain no longer amongst you. Hunt the wolves from the land, to the glory of God and the rage of the devil. Then will peace and blessing return, and great joy in heaven with God, and on earth with those who heartily serve Him and His saints. Amen." Hardly had he uttered the last word than he disappeared through a side door and was no more seen. As for us, we passed quietly through the staring and threatening mob. No hand was raised against us at that moment, but danger lay about us on every side, and it was no pleasure to recognise the fact that the sword of

Damokles always hung by a hair over our head. Feeling very uneasy at our insecure condition, I was sent, on the part of the rest, to the authorities of the canton, especially to Abbe Girard,\* and the mayor, Eduard Pfyffer, to beg that they would provide for our safety with all the means in their power. On my way I was recognised by a priest for one of the newly-introduced "heretics" as I rested a moment in an inn. The people there began to talk freely about me, and to cast looks of hatred and contempt at me. At last, the priest waxing bolder and bolder, accused me aloud of abominable heresy. I arose slowly, crossed with a firm step over to the black-frocked one, and asked him, "Do you know, sir, who Jesus Christ was, and do you hold Him in any particular esteem?" Quite nonplussed by my firm and quiet address he stammered out, "Certainly, He is God the Son, and we must all honour Him and believe on Him, if we are to escape everlasting damnation." I continued, "Then perhaps you can tell me whether Christ was a Catholic or a Protestant?"

The black-frock was silenced, the crowd stared, and presently began to applaud. The priest made off, and I was left in peace. My question had answered better than a long speech.

In Eduard Pfyffer I found an estimable sterling man of humane and firm character. He started from the fundamental principle that it was of little use freeing the people from this or that special superstition, but that we should do better by working for the future against sloth of thought and want of independent mental character from the very bottom—namely, by educating our young people. Therefore, he set great store by our undertaking. And when I told him of our downcast spirits and the absolute danger in which we lived at the moment, he replied:—"There is only one way to ensure your safety. You must win over the people. Work on a little longer, and then invite them all from far and near to a public examination. If this test wins over the crowd to your side, then, and only then, are you out of harm's reach." I went home, and we followed this counsel. The examination was held on a lovely day in autumn. A great crowd

\* A Swiss educational writer of great power and charm. His school books, "Sur la langue maternelle," are really valuable.

from several cantons flocked together, and there appeared delegates from the authorities of Zürich, of Bern, and other cantons. Our contest with the clerical party, which had been commented upon in most of the Swiss journals, had drawn all eyes upon us. We scored a great victory with our examination. The children developed so much enthusiasm, and answered so readily, that all were agreeably surprised, and rewarded us with loud applause. From seven in the morning till seven in the evening lasted this examination, closing with games and gymnastic exercises performed by the whole school. We rejoiced within ourselves; for our undertaking might now be regarded as fairly floated. The institution was spoken of in the great Council of the Canton, and most glowing speeches were delivered in our favour by Herr Pfyffer, Herr Amrhyn, and others. The Council decided that the castle and its outbuildings should be let to us at a very cheap rate, and that the Capuchin who had openly incited to riot against us should be expelled from the canton.

A little time after this examination a deputation from Bern came to invite Froebel to undertake the organisation of an Orphanage at Burgdorf. Froebel suggested that he should not be restricted to teach orphans alone in the new establishment; his request was granted, and he then accepted the invitation.

With this, it seemed to me, my mission in Switzerland was at an end, and I began to long to return to Keilhau; my eldest son was now a year old, and I had never yet seen him. Middendorff left his family, and replaced me at Willisau, living there for four years far away from wife and child.\* At Keilhau I found things had improved, and the numbers had increased most cheerfully. I determined to throw all my strength into the work of raising the mother institution from her slough of debt. I began by a piece of honourable swindling: and borrowed of Peter to pay Paul, covering one debt with another, but at the same time making it appear that we were paying our way. In this fashion our damaged credit was restored, and as the receipts grew

\* The editors venture to call attention to these little facts as a sample of the extraordinary devotion and sacrifice which Froebel knew how to inspire in his colleagues. This exchange of Barop and Middendorff took place in 1833.

happily greater and greater, I began to gain ground. Eventually I was able to send help to the other branches of our community, to increase my help as time went on, and to prepare a place of refuge for them if anything went wrong elsewhere.

In Switzerland our enterprise did not develop as rapidly as we desired, in spite of the sanction of the Council of the Canton. The institution at Willisau gained unlimited confidence there; but the malevolent opposition of the clerical party secretly flourished as before, and succeeded in depriving it of all aid from more distant places. Under these circumstances we could not attain that prosperity which so much activity and self-sacrificing work on the part of our circle must otherwise infallibly have brought.

Ferdinand Froebel and Middendorff remained in Willisau. Froebel and his wife went to Burgdorf, to found and direct the proposed Orphanage.\* In his capacity as Director, Froebel had to give what was called a Repetitive Course to the teachers. In that Canton, namely, there was an excellent regulation which gave three months' leave to the teachers once in every two years.† During this leave they assembled at Burgdorf, mutually communicated their experiences, and enriched their culture with various studies. Froebel had to preside over the debates and to conduct the studies, which were pursued in common. His own observations and the remarks of the teachers brought him anew to the conviction that all school education was as yet without a proper foundation, and, therefore, that until the education of the nursery was reformed nothing solid and worthy could be attained. The necessity of training gifted capable mothers occupied his soul, and the importance of the education of childhood's earliest years became more evident to him than ever. He determined to set forth fully his ideas on education, which the tyranny of a thousand opposing circumstances had always prevented him from working out in their completeness; or at all events to do this as regards the earliest years of man, and then to win over the world of women to the actual accomplishment of his plans. Pestalozzi's "Mothers' Book" (*Buch der*

\* In 1833.

† This regulation is still happily in force.

*Mütter*) Froebel would replace by a complete theoretical and practical system for the use of women in general. An external circumstance supervened at this point to urge him onwards. His wife grew alarmingly ill, and the physicians prescribed complete absence from the sharp Swiss mountain air. Froebel asked to be permitted to resign his post, that he might retire to Berlin. The Willisau Institution, although outwardly flourishing, was limited more and more narrowly by the bigotry of the priests, and must evidently now be soon given up, since the Government had passed into the hands of the Jesuit party. Langenthal and Ferdinand Froebel were nominated Directors of Burgdorf.\* Middendorff rejoined his family at Keilhau. Later on, Langenthal split off from the community and accepted the direction of a girls' school in Bern (that school which, after Langenthal, the well-known Fröhlich conducted); but Froebel never forgave him this step. Ferdinand Froebel remained, till his sudden and early death, Director of the Orphanage at Burgdorf. A public funeral, such as has never found its equal at Burgdorf, bore witness to the amount of his great labours, and to the general appreciation of their value.

When Friedrich Froebel came back from Berlin, the idea of an institution for the education of little children had fully taken shape in his mind. I took rooms for him in the neighbouring Blankenburg.† Long did he rack his brains for a suitable name for his new scheme. Middendorff and I were one day walking to Blankenburg with him over the Steiger Pass. He kept on repeating, "Oh, if I could only think of a suitable name for my youngest born!" Blankenburg lay at our feet, and he walked moodily towards it. Suddenly he stood still as if fettered fast to the spot, and his eyes assumed a wonderful, almost refulgent, brilliancy. Then he shouted to the mountains so that it echoed to the four winds of heaven, "*Eurêka!* I have it! KINDERGARTEN shall be the name of the new Institution!"

\* In 1836.

† Blankenburg lies on the way from Schwarzburg to Rudolstadt, about two hours' walk away from Keilhau.

**T**HUS wrote Barop in or about the year 1862, after he had seen all his friends pass away, and had himself become prosperous and the recipient of many honours. The University of Jena made him a doctor, and the Prince of Rudolstadt created him his Minister of Education. Froebel slept in Liebenstein, and Middendorff at the foot of the Kirschberg in Keilhau. They sowed and reaped not; and yet to possess the privilege of sowing, was it not equivalent in itself to reaping a very great reward? In any event, it is delightful to remember that Froebel, in the April of 1852, the year in which he died (June 21st), received public honours at the hands of the general congress of teachers held in Gotha. When he appeared that large assembly rose to greet him as one man; and Middendorff, too, who was inseparable from Froebel, so that when one appeared the other was not far off, had before his death (in 1853) the joy of hearing a similar congress at Salzungen declare the system of Froebel to be of world-wide importance, and to merit on that account their especial consideration and their most earnest examination.

A few words on Middendorff, culled from Lange's account, may be serviceable. Middendorff was to Froebel as Aaron was to Moses. Froebel, in truth, was "slow of speech and of a slow tongue" (Exod. iv. 10), and Middendorff was "his spokesman unto the people" (v. 16). It was the latter's clearness and readiness of speech which won adherents for Froebel amongst people who neither knew him nor could understand him. In 1849 Middendorff had immense success in Hamburg; but when Froebel came, later on, to occupy the ground thus conquered beforehand, he had to contend against much opposition, for every one missed the easy eloquence of Middendorff, which had been so convincing. Dr. Wichard Lange came to know Froebel when the latter visited Hamburg in the winter of 1849-50. At this time he spent almost every afternoon and evening with him, and held the post of editor of Froebel's *Weekly Journal*. Even after this close association with Froebel, he found himself unable thoroughly to go with

the schemes for the education of little children, the Kindergarten, and with those for the training of Kindergarten teachers. "Never mind!" said Froebel, out of humour, when Lange told him this; "if you cannot come over to my views now, you will do so in ten years' time; but sooner or later, *come you must!*" Dr. Lange nobly fulfilled the prophecy, and the edition of Froebel's collected works (Berlin 1862), from which we derive the present text (and much of the notes), was his gift of repentance to appease the wrath of the Manes of his departed friend and master. Nor was he content with this; but by his frequent communications to *The Educational Journal* (*Die Rheinischen Blätter*), originally founded by Diesterweg, and by the Froebelian spirit which he was able to infuse into the large boys'-school which he long conducted at Hamburg, he worked for the "new education" so powerfully and so unweariedly that he must be always thankfully regarded as one of the principal adherents of the great teacher. His connection with the Froebel community was further strengthened by a most happy marriage with the daughter of Middendorff.