

PESTALOZZI, 1746–1827.

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PESTALOZZI believed that a good education should be part of the birthright of every child. He wished the blessings of education to be, in the phrase used by Wordsworth who was his contemporary, “in widest commonalty spread.” To this end he gave his life and fortune to the poor. He knew that the right training of the children of the well-to-do is bound up with that of the children of the poverty-stricken and disinherited. In tenderness and compassion he had something of the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. The Canton of Aargau wrote on his grave a short tribute to his labours: “Saviour of the poor at Neuhof; at Stanz the father of orphans; at Burgdorf and Munchenbuchsee founder of schools for the people; at Yverdun the educator of humanity; man, christian, citizen. All for others; nothing for himself.”

As a thinker no man did more than he to make Europe understand that the course of education should be adapted to the stages of the development of the mind and character of each individual child. He was a pioneer in the study of child-nature; in the investigation of the deep problems which underlie the apparent simplicity of elementary teaching; in appreciation of the value of the training of the hand and eye, along with that of the power of observation, reasoning and reflection, in the education of children; and, above all, in endeavouring to find a method of moral, intellectual and physical training which will produce equilibrium and inner peace. His mind, his life, were given to the study of the fundamental things in education. With unselfish devotion he tried to find a method of training children which would “develop heart, mind and body in such a way as to bring the flesh into subjection to the spirit.” He cared intensely for the freedom of individual development, but saw that the individual realises freedom through accepting the duties which fall upon him in the home and in the community. Home training,

[p 117]

school-training, and the training which comes through experience of the duties of life were in Pestalozzi’s thought inseparable in their conjoint influence, though in specific problems of methodical application distinct.

Thus, Pestalozzi stands out as one of the great figures in the history of modern education in the West. He is the link between Rousseau and Kant, between the Edgeworths and Froebel, between the revolutionary and the stabilising tendencies of the nineteenth century in education. What Joubert wrote for France, what Wordsworth wrote for England, on the aims of education as an influence for good in the life of the community, Pestalozzi wrote for Switzerland. And because he gave more thought to questions of educational method and practice than Wordsworth or Joubert gave, his work has had more direct (though not a deeper) influence than their’s upon the conduct of schools.

Even during his lifetime Pestalozzi’s thought and experience had considerable influence in his country. Robert Owen went to see Pestalozzi at work. J. P. Greaves studied under him at Yverdun. To Greaves Pestalozzi wrote in 1818 his *Letters on Early Education*. In the first of these Pestalozzi said: “Happy should I be if I might one day speak through your voice to the mothers

of Great Britain. How does my glowing heart expand at the opening prospect which has this moment filled my imagination. To behold a great and mighty nation, known of old to appreciate with equal skill the glory of powerful enterprise and the silent joy of domestic life, intent upon the welfare of the rising generation; establishing the honour and happiness of those who shall one day stand in their places; securing to their country her glory and her liberty, by a moral elevation of her children. And shall not the heart of a mother leap in the consciousness that she too is to have her share in this immortal work.”

Pestalozzi's influence was shown in the establishment of an increasing number of infant schools in Britain. His ideas and methods also influenced many private school teachers, men and women, notably Dr. Mayo, of Cheam, and the Rev. John Brunner, of Liverpool. Sir James Kay Shuttleworth appreciated their significance. But Pestalozzi's influence was most widely spread through Britain and the English speaking world by the second chapter (published in 1858) of Herbert Spencer's book on Education, the chapter in which he drew upon the [p 118] experience of his father, W. G. Spencer, a Pestalozzian teacher in Derby.

John Curwen, the teacher of Tonic Sol-fa, was a Pestalozzian. F. D. Maurice was one of those who helped to make Pestalozzi's ideas known in England. Joseph Payne drew R. H. Quick's attention to them and thus brought Pestalozzi into the main stream of British thought on the history of education. Mr. John Russell made Pestalozzi more fully known to British readers by his translation of Roger de Guimps' *Pestalozzi: his life and work*. A later service was rendered by Professor A. J. Green, of Sheffield, by his books on Pestalozzi's educational ideas.