

The Froebel Educational Institute.

The following Address was delivered by Mrs. ALFRED BAILEY, at a Drawing-room Meeting held at her house, 43, Sinclair Road, West Kensington, on Saturday, March 31st, 1894, with the object of making the Froebel Educational Institute known to her friends.

I feel it my duty to say a few words to-day, to explain more fully than I could in my invitation the object of this Meeting which you have kindly come to attend. The idea of it arose from my wish to make known to my friends an Institution which is shortly to be established near here.

The Froebel Educational Institute will, when completed, comprise a Training College for Teachers of Froebel's System of Education, a Kindergarten and School for paying pupils, and, when funds permit, a Free Kindergarten and School for poor children. Such is the design of the promoters of the scheme. I shall leave Mr. Montefiore to tell you the history of the Institution, and Mr. Courthope Bowen will explain more fully than I can its aims and objects, and also the nature of Froebel's System; but I will just state my own interest in both System and Institution, with the hope of arousing a similar interest in others. With regard to the System, my experience of it began nearly twenty years ago, when my eldest child was about four years old. I was feeling the want of help in educating him, and attended a course of Lectures to Mothers, on Froebel's System, which Madame Michaelis, who had just come to England, gave at that time, and it came to me as a revelation—as the very thing I needed. I saw that in the hands of a well-trained teacher, the Kindergarten would indeed be the growing-ground for the budding-time of a child's life, that *all* the faculties which were gradually developing would be drawn out and guided in a right direction; that it would not be a place where children were “taught in play,” or where they “made useless little mats,” as I had heard, but one where simple means would be used to train the observation, and to teach colour, form and number; where the ear would learn to delight in time and tune, where head and hand would work together to invent and create, where habits of obedience and self-control, patience, and love would be inculcated: that in the games, limbs would be strengthened, muscles wisely exercised, and that each child would take its part, and would be shown that co-operation

with others was necessary for the enjoyment and success of the whole: that facts in natural history, &c., would be learnt, and, best of all, that this, and much more, could be accomplished without the aid of books, and before reading began. I was able, with the kind help of a friend, who offered a room in her house and her garden, to get up a small class, and Madame Michaelis gave the first lessons to my own and my friend's children, and by joining with them constantly, I got more insight into the methods employed. Since then my interest in the System has only deepened the more I have known of it, and just now it has increased still more, as I have sent my daughter to train under Madame Michaelis, knowing that the best help I could give her for educating her own or other people's children was to study its principles. I may say here that I have had no experience of the System after the Kindergarten age, except in the help it has given me towards home training, and, shall watch with interest what this Institute promises to show us in that way; but I *can* say, that life begun in a Kindergarten does not *disqualify* either boys or girls for book-learning later, nor even for standing the test of examinations.

Madame Michaelis has spent the last twenty years amongst us, teaching and training teachers, and promoting with untiring energy and unselfishness this great cause, and has been, I believe, more instrumental than anyone in making the System meet our English requirements. I feel, therefore, double interest in this Institute, knowing that she will eventually be at the head of it, and I think that, when it is opened, it ought to be in some way a recognition of what she has done for us, as well as a proof that England has adopted the System, and can show it in full working.

The Institute has also a special interest for me, and should have for many who live near, from the fact that it is to stand almost under the shadow of that other great School, which has brought to many of us such valuable educational help. It seems to me fitting that it should be so, as Dean Colet, the founder of St. Paul's, the noble, large-minded educational reformer of his day, dedicated his school to the Child Jesus, and was full of the same real love for children which Froebel had; he also wished his scholars to be of any nationality, and from this fact we may gather that he recognized, as Froebel did later, the needs of *humanity* for a system of early training; and I believe, could he come amongst us to-day, he would hail with delight the Kindergarten, as the *right* step for the first one on the educational ladder; and I hope that many boys beginning life in this Institute may pass on eventually to St. Paul's School, and that we shall hear from the Masters that they come in better training for both work and play than others who have not had the same advantage. In the Training College I hope we may see each year a number of women anxious to study the System, which will fit them to be better mothers than we of past generations; or to make Teaching their profession. In these days of discussion as to what is, and what is not, woman's work, there can be *no* doubt that the education of young children belongs essentially to their sphere, and I think *all* young girls ought, if possible, to train in this way.

We want the help of men too, especially that of fathers, for the little ones must feel that the home life is in accordance with that of the school, or no good results can follow. A man has worked out this System for us, so it is no "woman's fad;" and as one great aim of it is to develop character by means of work, it is a field in which all may labour with only good results to themselves and others, at whatever age they take it up. Its ideal is a more perfect comprehension of the Will and Love of God by an ever-deepening study of His Laws.

The Institute will not be opened till the end of the year, but the Kindergarten, which will be in connection with it, is started now in Glazbury Road, West Kensington, close by the site of the building, and I hope that parents will go and see it, and, if possible, send their children there at once.