

MRS. J. SALIS SCHWABE

THE death of Mrs. Julie Salis Schwabe, the Foundress of this Institute, took place, after a few hours' illness, at Naples, on the 20th of May—to the deep sorrow of her many friends, and also a severe loss to the public. Her work in Naples, followed by this Froebel Institute, were the climax of a life of self-devotion.

The following sketch of her life and work at Naples is copied from *The Manchester Guardian* of the 23rd May:—

“ An interesting and striking personality has passed away by the decease, at Naples, of Mrs. Julie Salis Schwabe. She was a native of Hamburg, and was educated at Leipsic. At the early age of seventeen she married her cousin, Mr. Salis Schwabe; and came to Manchester in 1837, taking up her residence at Rhodes, near Middleton, near to the extensive calico-printing works of the firm of Salis Schwabe and Co. Her husband, who was a public-spirited and philanthropic man, formed an intimate attachment to Mr. Cobden, whom he several times accompanied on tours to the principal cities of the Continent. They made the acquaintance of numerous leaders of fiscal and economical science,

who were sympathetic with the great Free-trader's principles and aims. A selection from the correspondence of the two friends was published by Mrs. Schwabe in French in 1879 and in English last year, in aid of her plans for the promotion of elementary education in Italy, to the deplorable condition of which her attention was drawn at the conclusion of the struggle for national unity. Her ardent sympathy with Garibaldi and other heroes of the war led to a friendship with him, one result of which was the address which, in 1861, he issued to the women of Italy. In answer to this appeal, a number of Italian ladies met, and formed, at Turin, what was termed "The Italian Ladies' Philanthropic Association." A reference to Mrs. Schwabe's share in the initiation of the scheme may be discerned in the following sentence from the programme:—"We shall accept any suggestion from all who, in Italy or abroad, wish to serve our charitable enterprises, and at once shall accept the co-operation of our English sisters, so rich in experience." In July, 1861, Mrs. Schwabe received an official appeal from the new society for assistance. "Our will," it ran, "is strong, but our hands are feeble: and therefore we appeal to you, who are so well acquainted with the destitute condition of the lower classes of Naples, as well as with the philanthropic intentions of Garibaldi and our own objects, trusting that you will kindly be the interpreter of our intentions to our English sisters." Mrs. Schwabe carried out, with an energy and power of persuasion peculiar to herself, the idea of her Italian

friends; and the result of her enthusiastic efforts were shortly manifested in a fund amounting to £2,000, which she collected from English and German admirers of Garibaldi and sympathisers with Italian unity and progress. Her attached friend and frequent guest Jenny Lind gave a concert in London for this noble purpose, in which she was assisted by Madame Tietjens and the Italian artists of the Opera, and realised £1,000. With this timely help, and two years' annual subscriptions, amounting to £400, an elementary school was established in Naples. Until 1865 the work was admirably conducted by Miss Reeve, who unfortunately fell a victim to the cholera, then raging in the city. Some delay occurred owing to the closing of the school as a consequence of the epidemic, and the energy of Mrs. Schwabe was called in for its restoration to activity. She thus recorded the facts:—"In the winter of 1871-2 I went to Rome and Naples, and was introduced to Signor Correnti, the Minister of Public Instruction. He gave me introductions to the authorities at Naples, and I succeeded in obtaining from the Municipio the gift of part of an old monastery, called Donna Regina. The Government promised 24,000 francs for the adaptation of the building to school purposes, and it was to be made over to me, in perfect order, in November, 1872. Accordingly teachers were engaged and ready to begin their work; but owing to a change in the Municipio the promise was violated and the building was withheld. I had determined to abandon the Naples scheme when Signor Scialoja (the successor of Correnti), at an inter-

view I had with him at Rome in 1873, requested me to renew my attempt there and placed at my disposal not only the 24,000 francs promised to the Municipio by his predecessor, but also a large Government building at Naples, the former Collegio Medico. This building, which has large gardens and is far superior to Donna Regina and better suited to the purpose, was officially consigned to me for a term of three years from 1873, to be renewed at the expiration of every three years as long as the schools should continue to flourish."

This great success encouraged Mrs. Schwabe to enlarge her benevolent operations. Her original plan of establishing a Kindergarten and elementary school for the poor was extended so as to include the children of the middle as well as of the poorer classes. She accordingly sought additional pecuniary means, and though her plans were by many regarded as somewhat chimerical, they eventually resulted in achievements far in excess of her own hopes. The building granted for three years proved so manifestly useful that she succeeded in 1876, with the help of the Ministry of Signor Bonghi, in obtaining the concession of the building for thirty years longer. The institution continued to develop, and in 1884 Mrs. Schwabe received from the Government an extra subsidy of 50,000 francs for the rebuilding of one wing. During this long period the foundress had to bear alone all the responsibilities entailed by the work. She earnestly sought for some relief, and to secure for her institution a permanent basis of support. This she accomplished in the spring

of 1887, when, under Signor Coppino, Minister of Public Instruction, it was constituted by Royal decree a body corporate, with the title "Istituto Fröbeliano Internazionale, Vittoria Emanuele II." The building was devoted to educational purposes for ever, with an annual subsidy of 12,400 lire. The leading principle of the scheme is that of Fröbel, *viz.* that the child must be guided from earliest infancy to become a useful and, therefore, a happy member of society, by the harmonious development of all its faculties; and that it must be taught not only "to know" but "to do." As in the family, boys and girls are educated together. The institution in 1892 numbered 900 pupils. It was Mrs. Schwabe's earnest desire to add such technical training as would finally prepare both sexes for active life.

Her next special effort was for the establishment in London not only of a Kindergarten school on a large scale, but of an allied institution for the education and training of teachers of its fundamental principles."

In 1890 a private meeting was held in Manchester to consider the scheme, and in the summer of 1893 the land was purchased for the site of her model training school, and arrangements were made by which a successful private training college, conducted by Madame Michaelis, was transferred to Mrs. Schwabe's institution, the operations of which began under very encouraging auspices. Mrs. Schwabe was one of the earliest adher-

ents and admirers of William Ellis, the founder of the Birkbeck Schools. Her faith in the soundness of the educational system he advocated, as illustrated in the Kindergarten system, was earnest and unflinching.

There only remains a wing for the Free Kindergarten (or model school for the poor) still to be built. The Empress Frederick of Germany visited the Institute in March 1895, and expressed sincere sympathy and much satisfaction with all she saw in it.

H.R.H. the Princess Christian has graciously consented to open the new wing this year, but alas! the hope that Mrs. Salis Schwabe's intention of being present, is sadly ended by her unexpected death. Her noble and beautiful character and example is indelibly impressed on all who had the happiness of knowing her personally, as well as those who through her work knew her, for hers was a life of self-renunciation, with a wide, earnest, and deeply religious spirit, full of love to her fellow-creatures in all countries, with an earnest endeavour to raise the humblest through the means of education.

The wide appreciation of her work in Naples and the love and respect in which she was held was testified by a remarkable demonstration at her funeral.

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The Prefect and other officials and many gentlemen and representatives also of the working classes, and children made an immense procession. Beautiful wreaths were sent from the Empress of Germany, the Queen of Italy, and the Prefect of Naples, and were placed upon the coffin.

*“ Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more ;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.”*

July 1st, 1896.