

Reprinted from the "MIDDLETON ALBION," Saturday, February 15th, 1879.

*Madame Salis Schwabe on Education, at a Meeting
in Rhodes Works School.*

ON Saturday evening, Madame Schwabe gave a very interesting lecture in the Rhodes Works Schoolroom, on "her educational efforts in Italy, and their bearing on education generally, with special reference to education in this neighbourhood." There was a large and fashionable audience, on the platform being three sons of Madame Schwabe—Mr. E. S. Schwabe, B.A., of Cheetham Hill; Major G. S. Schwabe (16th Lancers), Weaste; and Captain F. S. Schwabe (24th L.R.V.), Rhodes. Madame Schwabe was loudly cheered on entering the room, and when she ascended the platform she addressed the audience as follows:—

My dear friends,—Before all let me thank you for having so kindly responded to my invitation, and I need not say it is a great happiness to me to see around me some of the old well-known faces, and the children of many who greeted me when I first came, now nearly 42 years ago, to this neighbourhood as a bride, with my dear husband, and when I was received, I might almost say, like a young queen. You will, however, readily understand that the thoughts of the past, combined with the interests of the present, are so overpowering, that I feel unable to trust to the inspiration of the moment, and must ask you to bear with me whilst I read the thoughts I have committed to paper. No doubt some among you can remember how my lamented husband laboured to lay the foundation of the prosperity of this village, and I think those who knew him will feel with me that had his life been spared, his continued aim would have been to raise the moral and mental standard of the population. When he died, his children were at first too young to personally carry on the work, but I have now, with God's blessing, lived to see my sons grown up, and endeavouring to guide and keep the firm of S. Schwabe and Co. at as high a standard as their father strove to give it, and with the children of the same dear old helpmates around them. My present aspiration is, that the new generation may prepare a happy future for their children, which, I feel sure, cannot be achieved for the masses, without a more practical education, after Fröebel's system, by a simultaneous development from the earliest childhood, of the physical, moral, and mental powers in man, so that a child may not merely learn to walk, to write, and to read, but be led to think, reason, and act correctly. The system to which I allude is, however, little understood as yet, I fear, and many think, of Fröebel only in connection with the Kindergarten, considering the latter merely as a means to occupy children in a pleasant way, so as to keep them out of mischief. Fröebel only called his school a Kindergarten—a children's garden—with the idea that the children were the plants, and the parents and teachers the gardeners; and as every good gardener must learn to understand the nature of each plant so as to give it the right nourishment and atmosphere, so everyone who undertakes the teaching and care of children must study the character and gifts of each individual child, so as to develop the talents with which God has endowed them, instead of cramming their heads with matters which they cannot digest, nor know

how to apply, and making education to a great extent a mere exercise of memory. In prospect of this gathering, I could not refrain from making a translation of a letter which I recently received from a friend in Berlin—a niece of Fröebel's—who spent a year in his house when a child, and who now, encouraged by her husband, nobly devotes her best energies to imparting to mothers and teachers her great uncle's educational principles for the benefit of the future generation, and, with your permission, I will now ask my son to read an extract from it.

MAJOR GEORGE S. SCHWABE (16th Lancers), then read the following extract:—

"It is altogether a misfortune for the future development of Fröebel's ideas, that people stick so to his Kindergarten. His idea is much more comprehensive, but at present it is petrified in the Kindergarten, and receiving no further development, degenerates there into miserable triviality. Fröebel grasps the position of a child with respect to his life's work, and discovers the form of this work corresponding to the age of the child. This work does not consist alone in folding paper, etc., but also in giving help in domestic duties. This folding, plaiting, building, etc., is always more or less for the child himself; he is certainly doing something, and this is always better than doing nothing; but he is in fact only working for himself. The child must be trained from the first to help and to care for the whole household, according to his powers. At first, imperceptibly, quite gently, and always at the mother's side, and joyfully. Fröebel wanted to educate and train women for this purpose, and to awaken, foster, and elevate their spirit of maternity—to deepen their sense of family affection on the one side, and on the other side to set it free from family egotism. They should educate their children with a view to the human communities, and the children's capacity for serving the same; and the mother must become the mother of the family, and also of the community, according to circumstances, age, and endowments. In our days no woman can educate her child in accordance with the spirit of the age, who has not, at the same time, an understanding of, interest in, and love for, the community in which she lives. The training of the true Kindergarten teacher must, therefore, be placed upon quite a different footing; she must move in the community, and work amongst the people. District visiting, societies for promoting sanitary objects, etc., must be combined with the training school for teachers. We have made a slight commencement here (in Berlin) with our sanitary society, which is in connection with the Kindergarten."

MADAME SCHWABE continued as follows:—And now, my friends, I must tell you how Fröebel's principles have been applied and worked out at the *Ex-Collegio Medico*, in Naples—the name of the great building the Italian Government has handed over to me for educational purposes—first for three years, and since 1876 for thirty years longer, with Government grants which amounted from 1873 to 1878 to 60,000 lire—or about £2,000, and I continue to receive regular

annual grants. I may name that I have the right to appoint my successor during the thirty years alluded to. This institution forms an organic whole, and the children who enter the Kindergarten when three years old, will leave us, I trust, at the age of 18 or 19, with a profession in their head or a trade in their fingers—in fact, capable of earning their livelihood, if need be, or of undertaking the management of their own children and households. We train the poor orphan girls, of whom we maintain 42 in the house, gratuitously—as cooks, housemaids, laundresses, or teachers, allowing their natural gifts—the indications of which we watch closely—to determine in which career they will best excel; and here I cannot refrain from pointing out what I believe to be one great source of the painful moral, social, and political state of our age, namely, everyone wishing and seeking for themselves and their children another sort of occupation, and a different position in life to that in which they have been brought up, and for which they are adapted. And here, to avoid being misunderstood, I must remark that I fully approve of everyone aspiring to mental, material, and, above all, moral progress, and of their working for that purpose, only they must change the standard of their aspiration, and measure the excellency of their position—not by what their trade or occupation is, but by the manner in which they perform what they have to do, not striving merely for outward worldly honours, but rather seeking to excel in whatever their vocation may be, recognising the true dignity and value of a man, not in the name or fortune he may have inherited from his forefathers, but in the way he does honour to the name he bears, and the position he fills, whatever the latter may be. My worthy and able helpmates at Naples and I try to impress upon our children that the only true liberty is to be free of human passions and worldly prejudices, and to respect the opinions of others as we wish ours to be respected, acting on Christ's great and comprehensive lesson—"To do unto others as we would wish to be done by;" and as regards the equality of man, I fully recognise it morally in the sight of God, and I explained only the other day, to a foolish mother, who wished her child to be trained as a teacher or schoolmistress instead of a cook—for which she had so much more capacity—that the position of a first-rate honest, clean, economical, clever cook is far better than that of a *second* or *third-rate* teacher. We try to make our children understand that a servant, who, with good moral character, combines the faculty of doing well what she has undertaken, is, in the sight of God and of men whose opinion is worth anything, as great as a king or queen, and greater than a king or queen who does not know how to perform the duties of their high position. Fröebel's system of education is based on two eternal truths—natural science and mathematics. The former develops in young children the religious feelings and humility. They see that all their sowing and planting does not bring forth the flowers and fruit, without God sends the needful rain and sunshine; and a good Kindergarten teacher will daily bring the child's thoughts back to God, as the source from Whom all blessings come, and who guides and speaks to us in our conscience. Mathematics give the positive exactitude, and teach us to find always the correct form. But I fear I have ventured upon too vast a theme, and am trespassing too long on your patient hearing, and I will only add that if once the laws of God, or the spirit of love—which rules the universe—were properly understood, men would soon find out that obedience to them will be already on earth as in heaven, the best for

themselves. Men cannot go against the laws of Providence, and as there is in the animal world a great diversity of creatures, and each in its own place has its own vocation, so it is also in the mental and spiritual world; and just as little as a cat, which is very useful to free us from mice, can do the work of a horse or cow, just as little can a person who is born and bred in one sphere, adequately perform the duties of one born and trained in a different one. But by reading the twelfth chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, beginning at the fourth verse, and continuing to the end of the thirteenth chapter, you will gain a true insight into my meaning, and the principles on which I, as a Protestant, am able to work most satisfactorily amongst a Roman Catholic community. (Hear, hear.) But to return to the institution at Naples. As far as the girls are concerned, the establishment is pretty complete, but workshops are still to be added for the boys. The day schools number at present over 300 scholars, and we have, besides the 42 free boarders, as I named, 20 paying ones entirely in the house. I think you will agree that Fröebel's idea, as described in the letter from my friend at Berlin, which my son has read to you, of teaching the children from the first to take part in household duties, is fully carried out, when I tell you that with 70 people (children and teachers) residing in the institution, no servants are kept except an old porter, who held that situation for twenty-five years whilst the building was used as a hospital and medical school, before it was handed over to me. I thought it would be hard to discharge the old man, and we find his services useful for doing the marketing, and helping the young girls with the heavy work in the kitchen—lifting heavy kettles and pots. The motto over one of the large doorways in the kitchen is "*work ennobles*." The boarders at present range between the ages of three and sixteen; those who are ten years old and upwards are called "*madre*" (mother), and each of them has charge of a little one. The little mothers rise at five o'clock in the morning, and at six o'clock, after they are dressed, and have put the dressing-room in order, the younger children rise, and each so-called mother washes and dresses her child, and makes her bed and that of her child. At half-past seven the bell rings for prayers and breakfast, the latter having been prepared by some of the girls, there being more so-called little mothers than children. The time between breakfast and nine o'clock—when school commences—is devoted to household work, and as the German proverb says, "*Viele Hände machen bald ein Ende*," or, many hands make light work. By nine o'clock the dormitories and all rooms upstairs are in order. The large schoolrooms downstairs are kept clean by the porter and a man we keep to pump the water upstairs, for Naples, alas! is far behind in drainage, and in the supply of water to the houses. The house work is so divided that each duty comes to each child in turn. But I dare not enter more into particulars, and will only state that the elementary schools being in connection with the Kindergarten, Fröebel's spirit of cultivating and bringing out of each child the gifts with which Nature has endowed them, instead of cramming them with information unsuited to their capacities, is carried on throughout the institution. One branch of the same is a normal school for training teachers on Fröebel's system, and the pupils have a great advantage, by the Kindergarten and elementary schools being in the same building, of being practically as well as theoretically taught, for in the morning they are in the schools downstairs, and in the afternoon they have their lessons from the different professors, and the

directress of the seminary, or normal school; and I may tell you that in connection with the school there are some of the best professors from the University of Naples, and they give the greatest satisfaction. As regards myself, I should like you to know that, though I feel that Providence has, for a time, given me an educational work to do in a far distant land, my heart and spirit are none the less interested in the educational labour and progress of England—(hear, hear)—and for dear old association sake, of Rhodes in particular, and, therefore, being once more among you, and rejoicing that my sons have succeeded with equal good fortune, and I, trust also in the spirit of their father, in keeping, as yet, nearly all hands at Rhodes employed whilst so many commercial and political troubles (usually inseparable) have thrown so many people, at home and abroad, out of work, I gladly seized the opportunity, in sympathy with my sons, to arrange this little gathering at Rhodes, at which I might lay my views of education—formed now in some years' practical experience—before you, in the ardent hope that before I quit this world, I may see a model school in operation at Rhodes, such as my husband contemplated, and, in fact, would have erected, had his life been spared a few years longer—for you know he was quite determined upon this—but he was suddenly taken away. I feel morally convinced, my dear friends, that you will, on close examination, feel with me that the troubles of the present day—and they are many and great in Europe just now—are but the natural consequences of imperfect, and in many cases, depraved commercial, political, and social morality; and that this arises, in a great degree, from the want of education in first principles, and the indifference, and, I believe, unconscious, selfish inactivity of those who are in independent circumstances, who know, and also wish what is right, but yet do not take the trouble to put right wrongs apparently trivial, but which, by their becoming bad habits and fashions, are tending to very injurious consequences. I must here remark that I believe the sins of omission are frequently quite as positive and injurious as those of commission, and to make well-meaning and well-wishing and able people among all classes more active and united in their efforts for good, absorbs all the moral, mental, and material powers of the evening of my life. Most fully do I agree with the remark of the German Ambassador at Rome—Baron Von Keudell—when he said one day to me that “the future of Italy, Germany, and, in fact, of Europe, lay in the hands of the women and schoolmasters.” (Hear, hear.) I feel most anxious that the first united efforts of the really able people of all nations, and all theological creeds, should be on behalf of the educational question. As practice is better than precept, I most ardently wish that we attempt to establish a real model school in this comparatively small village—a model after that which, under the protection and with the financial help of the Italian Government, and the assistance of the friends of education in different countries, I have been the humble means, the weak instrument—made strong in weakness—of forming, and which will, I trust, ere long be completed in Naples. I know many trust that the School Board will soon supply all wants and deficiencies, but in the first place I feel morally convinced that before such a School Board is in operation at Rhodes and Middleton, many of the present children's school years will be passed; and, secondly, I do not consider that the present Government code would produce a model educational institution such as I, in all humility but truthfulness, may call

the one at Naples; and I can only repeat it would be the height of my delight and ambition to see a similar one, though on a smaller scale, established for the children in this neighbourhood, to many of whose grand-parents and parents my late husband was so deeply attached, and whose interests, in fact, he identified always with his own. Such, indeed, should be always the feeling between masters and their employes if a blessing is to rest on the business, as has hitherto been the case at Rhodes works, in bad as well as in good times. But to achieve this end a school such as I am anxious to see at Rhodes would be the best means, for I feel convinced there is as much mischief done, and misery caused, by sheer ignorance and want of reasoning powers, as by malice. After having spoken so much of Fröebel's system for beginning systematically the child's development from earliest infancy, I must draw your attention, and in particular that of the schoolmasters and mistresses present, to a great English pedagogue, who, though not a teacher by profession, has taught much of what is most useful for men and women to know, among the poor as well as the rich. I allude to Mr. William Ellis, the founder of the Birkbeck schools at Peckham, near London, and the Gospel Oak schools near Regent's Park, who not only devoted large sums from his own moderate private income, but spent his evenings, after a hard day's work in the city, for the cause he had at heart. His progressive lessons (of which I have some copies on the table) will be found very helpful to those employed in teaching. A book of his, entitled “Religion in Common Life,” is the *resumé* of a year's lessons, given at the request of Prince Albert every Saturday to the Royal children; and when I had the honour, about ten years ago, of being first introduced, at Berlin, to the Crown Princess of Germany—our Princess Royal—the latter said to me: “Does Mr. Ellis never come to Berlin? I should so like to see him again. I cannot tell you what I learned from that man, and how I daily feel what I owe to him. My father also valued him so highly.” Mr. Ellis's teaching of social science, or rather conduct, how best to perform one's duties in this world, succeeding the infant training by a good “*Kindergärtnerin*,” or teacher of Fröebel's system, will, I doubt not, bring forth excellent results, and if we should succeed in establishing a model school on the principles I have indicated, I cannot help thinking the result might lead to a great improvement in the present code, and vastly increase the usefulness of the School Board, by leading them to teach more what makes the best and ablest members of the human society, instead of what secures at present the most marks and highest grants. I am fully conscious that if I had laboured to establish in England an institution such as I have formed, with the help of the Italian Government, in Naples, I should have met with far fewer financial difficulties than those I have had, and still have to contend with there. But, on the other hand, I also feel sure I could never have had such success in so short a time. Here, as in Germany, it would only be a work of reform, and one would have to work as hard to overcome old prejudices as to introduce new and better methods; whilst, in Italy I met, so to say, with virgin ground, and could introduce the best systems I could find in different countries, and plant them on most fertile ground, for here I must remark that the natural intelligence of the masses in South Italy is as great as their ignorance is profound, and they have what is called a *dolce cuore*, meaning that they are easily led for good as well as evil. But now, to come to a

practical conclusion. If I have succeeded in convincing some of you parents that the method of education I have advocated will be the best to adopt for your children, then set to work in unity the best forces in church and chapel for the establishment of such a school as I have described, carrying out Fröebel's motto, "*Lasst uns unseren Kin, dern leben,*" or "Let us live for our children"; in fact, doing what is best for their future here and hereafter, instead of what brings in perhaps a little more temporal gain. If party and sectarian spirit can be overcome by the spirit of love, and the members of church and chapel unite, I feel sure that in a short time much could be done, for having then the two school houses—the church and Rhodes work school—at our disposal, the pecuniary sacrifices would be much less as regards the building, but to develop after Fröebel's system the body as well as the heart and mind, some different school furniture and school material will have to be bought. For such a purpose I am in that case ready to spare £100 out of this year's income—(hear, hear)—and I have no doubt my sons and some of the well-to-do people in Rhodes and Middleton, interested in the cause for their children's sake, would help so as to form an institution for the School Board later to work upon. I believe, with the schoolmistress from the Saltaire schools, whom my sons have engaged, and who is acquainted with the Fröebel system, and Mr. West, who, before he came to Rhodes, had the privilege of being for a month under the late Mr. Shield's (Mr. Ellis's head master at the Birkbeck school, near Peckham) training, and who continues to study Mr. Ellis's writing, we could, with the help of the present master and mistress of the church school—if they are ready to enter into our plans and methods—make an excellent school staff, and if any help or advice of mine from my practical experience can be of any service, they are fully at your commands whilst I am in England. (Applause.) If, however, the people of this neighbourhood are not yet ripe for the scheme I have just proposed, then I address myself specially to you, foremen and workmen of the Rhodes works, and all who are concerned in the firm of S. Schwabe and Co., here and in town, and my sons foremost, to help me to make Rhodes schools more perfect. And now, thanking you most warmly for the patient hearing you have given me, allow me to say I shall be most happy to reply to any question you may wish to put to me, or to listen to any remarks or proposals you may like to make. There being, perhaps, some amongst you to whom the name of Fröebel is unknown, I, in conclusion, name that he was a disciple of Pestalozzi, and like him one of the greatest educational reformers in this century. (Cheers.)

Mr. SCOTSON (head master of the Peter-street schools, Manchester) said that Fröebel's system was taught, to some extent, in this country. A good schoolmaster did teach Fröebel's system. He quite agreed with the Kindergarten for young children; he would admit that children who had been trained under that system went to a higher school better prepared than would otherwise be the case. (Hear, hear.) Some people had an idea that persons became teachers as a "last shift." He had heard tell of a man who, finding out that he could not get his living by shoemaking, turned into a teacher. (Laughter.) But that was a mistaken idea. They were not allowed to be schoolmasters unless they

thoroughly understood their business; they must not merely attend at the schools, but they must teach the children. It was laborious work, and it was the greatest pleasure a teacher had when he found out that one or two of his scholars had grasped the subject with which they had been dealing. (Hear, hear.) What was wanted to be taught in our schools was the subject of political economy. (Hear, hear.) He did not mean to say that they had not already a sufficient number of subjects to occupy their attention at school, but they would not allow them to take political economy, and that was wanted more than anything else. (Hear, hear.) If these principles were taught there would not be such wars between capital and labour—(hear, hear)—because they would then know that their interests were identical. (Applause.) He hoped if Mrs. Schwabe went to Sir Francis Stamford upon the subject of education, that she would bring this point prominently before him. He had listened to Mrs. Schwabe's paper with much interest, and he quite agreed with most of what she had advanced. (Applause.)

Mr. C. B. WEST complained that a teacher was restricted in his actions in government schools, and if he understood the admirable lecture of that evening at all, it was a direct attack on the code, upon its restrictions and limitations. This was specially the case with regard to that one very important subject referred to by Mr. Scotson. There was no subject which demanded more the teacher's care and earnestness than that of political economy. Notwithstanding the deplorable ignorance of the country on this subject, the Government did nothing in the direction of teaching it, but he hoped that the influence of Madame Schwabe and others would have the effect of getting it included in the code as an optional subject. He felt a word of praise was due to the clergy on an occasion like that. Hundreds and thousands of schools had been established by the sole efforts of many hard working clergymen, and then the Government had stepped in and assisted them. Good results had been obtained, but he believed that far grander results would be obtained under the school boards. (Hear, hear.) They might depend upon it they were coming to that, and in a few years board schools would be universal all over the country.

The CHAIRMAN returned thanks on behalf of Madame Schwabe for the attendance that evening.

Mr. HENRY WHEELER moved a vote of thanks to Madame Schwabe. He had very often met with ladies young and old, but he had never met with a more energetic lady than Madame Schwabe in his life. (Laughter and Cheers.) He had no doubt that the appeal which she had made would be very much appreciated, and he hoped they would seek to carry out her counsel. (Cheers.) Mr. Wheeler instanced two amusing stories in illustration of the ignorance which had prevailed in day schools, and said these were very good reasons why the public should attend well to the education of the young in that neighbourhood. He was much obliged to Madame Schwabe, and hoped she would live long, and that she would see her propositions carried into effect. (Cheers.)

This concluded the meeting, and a number of the friends present partook of tea.