

## INTRODUCTION.

### FROEBEL'S PHILOSOPHY.

#### I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF GERMANY IN FROEBEL'S TIME.

“BEWARE,” says Emerson, “when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet: then all things are at risk.” Something over a century ago, Immanuel Kant, a little old bachelor of Königsberg, “by whose punctual walk his neighbours set their watches,” and who “in the ordinary sense of the words had neither life nor history,” was troubled in spirit over current theories with regard to the nature and source of human knowledge. To-day we live in a world where everything great and small owns his influence. “He conquered for his people the empire of the air.” Indirectly, he also gave them their visible empire; for it was his first great disciple, Fichte, who, fired by the Critique of Practical Reason, created the national school system of Germany, and, by developing the intelligence and rousing the patriotism of his countrymen, set in motion the influences whose outcome has been the political independence and solidarity of the German

fatherland.\* Through its influence upon the willing mind of Schleiermacher, the reluctant mind of Frederick Maurice, and the hostile mind of Cardinal Newman, the philosophy created by Kant and developed by his successors has leavened the theologies of Germany, England, and Rome. Through Goethe and Schiller it has stamped itself upon German literature. Through Coleridge and Carlyle it has penetrated English literature. Through New England Transcendentalism it has become a power in American literature. Through the music of Beethoven and Wagner it has stirred in all susceptible souls lofty and mysterious emotions. Through Schelling, Oken, Carus, Oersted, and others it has laid its magic touch upon natural science. Last of all—but, if there be truth in the parable of the mustard seed, perhaps not least of all—it has bent itself to the lowly service of childhood, and, using as its in-

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\* "When, during the years of the French domination, it seemed as though the death knell of German nationality had been rung, when cowardly soldiers in masses deserted their flag while the battle raged, Fichte saw that the salvation of Germany lay in the education of her sons. 'Create a nation by national education!' he cried to the princes of Germany. The princes, at his exhortation, appealed to the people, and freedom from a foreign yoke was their reward. Not Blücher, not Schornhorst, but Fichte drove the French from the Fatherland. Fichte's deepest conviction was that the idea of the perfect state could only be realized through education. 'The reasonable state,' says he, 'can never be formed from existing material by artificial means; it must be evolved from the consciousness of an educated people.' The philosopher was the creator of the idea of national education—in one word, the pedagogic statesman."—WICHARD LANGE.

strument the mind of Froebel, is visibly transforming the nurseries and infant schools of all civilised lands.

When Mr. Alcott was asked to define transcendentalism, he answered promptly: "It means that there is something in the mind which did not get there through the senses." This definition suggests the point of departure for modern speculative philosophy. Kant could not believe that "all knowledge consists of impressions of the senses and the faint images of these impressions called up in memory and thinking." His mind recoiled from the idea that the "ego is only a subjective notion, a unity of the series of impressions called myself." He argued that knowledge being a product of two factors—an objective factor given in sensation and a subjective factor due to the constitution of the mind—thought could only arrive at the truth with regard to one factor by eliminating the other. Differently stated, since the mind in the act of cognition sets its own seal upon the data of sense, the removal of the impressed signet is necessary in order to show what the wax may be in itself. Upon investigation the signet turns out to be that of a sovereign, and the wax proves itself of a singular plasticity. Experience, reasons Kant, is partial and contingent. Hence no idea possessing the marks of universality and necessity can have been thence derived. All such ideas bear the royal stamp of mind, and must be native to its constitution. Applying this test, he discovers, doubtless to his own astonishment, that space