

# Pestalozzi, the great educator

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## PESTALOZZI, THE GREAT EDUCATOR.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi was born January 12th, 1746, in Zurich, where he passed the greater part of his youth. Already, at an early age, he began to write of his ambition, and for a time lived with his uncle in Richterswil. Many of his letters back to Zurich went to Anna Schulthess, a merchant's daughter, with whom he had fallen in love. About this time, when he was 21 years old, Pestalozzi worked with Lavater, who became the young man's trusted counsellor. When he grew to be about 24, the dream of his life ambition took concrete shape: the emancipating of the illiterate from their shackles of ignorance; the care of the homeless, and the rearing in home-like atmosphere of orphan children. But at this time he himself was so destitute that he abandoned, for the moment, his ambition to teach, to do social work. In the autumn of 1768 he obtained a piece of land in Birr, Aargau, and began to earn his living as a farmer. The following year he married Anna Schulthess, and they began life together on the rocky, boggy, large rambling farm in Birr. Scraggly firs and elders clumped together in scattered groups, and close by raced the grey waters of the Reuss, swirling down from the looming mountains.

Already in these first days Pestalozzi came to know the bitterness of disappointment. After trying to enlist the aid of neighbouring farmers in his social projects, he had to postpone his ambitions for a second time. He was a failure as a farmer, and was going deeper and deeper into debt. Finally Anna lost patience, and told him that her brothers would take over the farm, as well as the most pressing debts. She would then set him up in business, and he would be head of this new venture. But there burned within him that inner flame. "I have a large house, and the poor have none," he said to Anna. "My hands fail me in my present work, and to you, labor is irksome. If we have poor ones with us, then we will be really rich. They can spin for their livelihood, and I will teach them. That will be real work. After all, I am not in your employ." Carrying out this noble idea, he took poor children into his home, and at one time had as many as fifty staying with him. He wrote of the conditions these poor young ones had been forced to live in, and took great pleasure in teaching them. But in 1780, five years after he had started this plan, he was forced by the authorities to send the children back to regular institutions.

Somewhat later Pestalozzi came again in contact with the business world. A foreigner named Notz needed a townsman as proprietor of his shop, or at least someone in whose name he could run the business. Pestalozzi, for a small consideration, allowed the man to use his name, and then went to the "Platte" in Zurich, where he started a shelter for the poor of the city. Then, in the middle period of his life, came the French invasion. Poverty increased, and half-starved, homeless children roamed forlorn as lost puppies. At Stans, Pestalozzi became a father and a teacher to these young unfortunates.

Scarcely had Fate turned once more against him when new colored threads were spun in his life pattern. Swiss authorities gave Pestalozzi an opportunity to continue his work in the rooms of the old castle in Burgdorf. His name was now becoming more and more famous, and educators and students came from all over the country to see him, and to learn the "Pestalozzi method". Later he worked for a time in Munchenbuchsee, where he also founded a school. But in this flat, plain-like country so different from the green hills of Burgdorf, Pestalozzi did not feel at home. He accepted an invitation from the mayor of Yverdon to continue his educational work in this small town, and started to write again of his theories.

These were the happiest years of Pestalozzi's life. He was doing, unhampered, that which he had always wanted to do, and for the first time he was able to work without being troubled by material worries. Once again he revived his old dream of help-

ing the poor by founding a home in Clindy for indigent children, and in the following year, 1819, this was combined with a home in Yverdon. An old man now, his life ambitions were at last being realized. In 1826 he wrote some papers on his work in Burgdorf and Yverdon, and in his eightieth year, returned to Neuhoof where he spent his last days in contentment. He died on February 17, 1827. Pestalozzi lives on. Essentially an idealist and a dreamer, he was a dreamer who turned his dreams into realities. Time has erased much of the material evidence of his work, but the personality of this man who had such a boundless compassion for humanity cannot die. His name will inspire through the ages.

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ACCOUNTS FOR THE FIRST FINANCIAL YEAR.

<u>1935</u>		<u>Dr.</u>	<u>Cr.</u>
October	: Postage	- 3. 6	
November	: Printing "Helvetia"	1. 0. 0	
	Postage	5. 0	
December	: Printing	1. 0. 0	
<u>1936</u>	Postage	5. 0	
January	: Printing	18. 6	
	Expes. re Baechler	1. 1. 6	
February	: Printing	18. 6	
March	: Cable to Switzerland re Consulate	1. 0. 0	
	Printing	18. 6	
April	: Printing	18. 6	
May	: Printing	18. 6	
June	: Printing	18. 6	
	Postage	4. 0	
July	: Printing	18. 6	
	Postage, receipt books,	7. 6	
August	: Printing	1. 2. 6	
	Postage & exchange on cheque	4. 6	
By Subscriptions :			
	49 Members - 10/-		24.10. 0
	Voluntary donations by old Members ...		2. 6. 0
	35 new Members @ 10/- to 2nd Year ...		17.10. 0
	Donation Breitenmoser		2. 8
	Surplus presentation Mr. Blau ...		2.15. 0
	Interest on Bank deposits		4. 6
		13. 3. 0	47. 8. 2
Bank-Balance		34. 2. 8	
Cash in Hand		2. 6	
		£47. 8. 2	£47. 8. 2

September 30, 1936, closes the first year of the Swiss Benevolent Society of New Zealand, and we can announce with pride that the state of its affairs is very satisfactory. With the great help of Mr. A.C. Blau, our late and very popular Consul, we have been able to put our undertaking on a sound footing. We are starting the second year with a membership of 85, a fine achievement for such a short period. Nevertheless, to make it a real success, we need more members and more funds. Old members are requested to pay their fee promptly.

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Address all correspondence to :

W. Ungemuth, Secretary,  
 Clarence St., Northcote,  
 AUCKLAND.