

The Story of My Life — Volume 04 eBook

The Story of My Life — Volume 04 by Georg Ebers

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Contents

The Story of My Life — Volume 04 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	8
Page 4.....	10
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	12
Page 7.....	13
Page 8.....	15
Page 9.....	16
Page 10.....	17
Page 11.....	19
Page 12.....	21
Page 13.....	23
Page 14.....	24
Page 15.....	26
Page 16.....	27
Page 17.....	28
Page 18.....	29
Page 19.....	31
Page 20.....	33
Page 21.....	34
Page 22.....	36



Page 23..... 37
Page 24..... 39
Page 25..... 41
Page 26..... 43
Page 27..... 45
Page 28..... 47
Page 29..... 49
Page 30..... 51
Page 31..... 53
Page 32..... 55
Page 33..... 57
Page 34..... 59
Page 35..... 61
Page 36..... 62
Page 37..... 64

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER XIII.		1
CHAPTER XIV.		14
CHAPTER XV.		18
CHAPTER XVI.		24
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		31
Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)		32
(Three Pages)		34



Page 1

CHAPTER XIII.

The founders of the Keilhau institute, and A Glimpse at the history of the school.

I was well acquainted with the three founders of our institute—Fredrich Froebel, Middendorf, and Langethal—and the two latter were my teachers. Froebel was decidedly “the master who planned it.”

When we came to Keilhau he was already sixty-six years old, a man of lofty stature, with a face which seemed to be carved with a dull knife out of brown wood.

His long nose, strong chin, and large ears, behind which the long locks, parted in the middle, were smoothly brushed, would have rendered him positively ugly, had not his “Come, let us live for our children,” beamed so invitingly in his clear eyes. People did not think whether he was handsome or not; his features bore the impress of his intellectual power so distinctly that the first glance revealed the presence of a remarkable man.

Yet I must confess—and his portrait agrees with my memory—that his face by no means suggested the idealist and man of feeling; it seemed rather expressive of shrewdness, and to have been lined and worn by severe conflicts concerning the most diverse interests. But his voice and his glance were unusually winning, and his power over the heart of the child was limitless. A few words were sufficient to win completely the shyest boy whom he desired to attract; and thus it happened that, even when he had been with us only a few weeks, he was never seen crossing the court-yard without a group of the younger pupils hanging to his coattails and clasping his hands and arms.

Usually they were persuading him to tell stories, and when he condescended to do so, older ones flocked around him too, and they were never disappointed. What fire, what animation the old man had retained! We never called him anything but “Oheim.” The word “Onkel” he detested as foreign, because it was derived from “avunculus” and “oncle.” With the high appreciation he had of “Tante”—whom he termed, next to the mother, the most important factor of education in the family—our “Oheim” was probably specially agreeable to him.

He was thoroughly a self-made man. The son of a pastor in Oberweissbach, in Thuringia, he had had a dreary childhood; for his mother died young, and he soon had a step-mother, who treated him with the utmost tenderness until her own children were born. Then an indescribably sad time began for the neglected boy, whose dreamy temperament vexed even his own father. Yet in this solitude his love for Nature awoke. He studied plants, animals, minerals; and while his young heart vainly longed for love, he would have gladly displayed affection himself, if his timidity would have permitted



him to do so. His family, seeing him prefer to dissect the bones of some animal rather than to talk with his parents, probably considered him a very unlovable child when they sent him, in his tenth year, to school in the city of IIm.

Page 2

He was received into the home of the pastor, his uncle Hoffman, whose mother-in-law, who kept the house, treated him in the most cordial manner, and helped him to conquer the diffidence acquired during the solitude of the first years of his childhood. This excellent woman first made him familiar with the maternal feminine solicitude, closer observation of which afterwards led him, as well as Pestalozzi, to a reform of the system of educating youth.

In his sixteenth year he went to a forester for instruction, but did not remain long. Meantime he had gained some mathematical knowledge, and devoted himself to surveying. By this and similar work he earned a living, until, at the end of seven years, he went to Frankfort-on-the-Main to learn the rudiments of building. There Fate brought him into contact with the pedagogue Gruner, a follower of Pestalozzi's method, and this experienced man, after their first conversation, exclaimed: "You must become a schoolmaster!"

I have often noticed in life that a word at the right time and place has sufficed to give the destiny of a human being a different turn, and the remark of the Frankfort educator fell into Froebel's soul like a spark. He now saw his real profession clearly and distinctly before him.

The restless years of wandering, during which, unloved and scarcely heeded, he had been thrust from one place to another, had awakened in his warm heart a longing to keep others from the same fate. He, who had been guided by no kind hand and felt miserable and at variance with himself, had long been ceaselessly troubled by the problem of how the young human plant could be trained to harmony with itself and to sturdy industry. Gruner showed him that others were already devoting their best powers to solve it, and offered him an opportunity to try his ability in his model school.

Froebel joyfully accepted this offer, cast aside every other thought, and, with the enthusiasm peculiar to him, threw himself into the new calling in a manner which led Gruner to praise the "fire and life" he understood how to awaken in his pupils. He also left it to Froebel to arrange the plan of instruction which the Frankfort Senate wanted for the "model school," and succeeded in keeping him two years in his institution.

When a certain Frau von Holzhausen was looking for a man who would have the ability to lead her spoiled sons into the right path, and Froebel had been recommended, he separated from Gruner and performed his task with rare fidelity and a skill bordering upon genius. The children, who were physically puny, recovered under his care, and the grateful mother made him their private tutor from 1807 till 1810. He chose Verdun, where Pestalozzi was then living, as his place of residence, and made himself thoroughly familiar with his method of education. As a whole, he could agree with him; but, as has already been mentioned, in some respects he went further than the Swiss reformer.



Page 3

He himself called these years his “university course as a pedagogue,” but they also furnished him with the means to continue the studies in natural history which he had commenced in Jena. He had laid aside for this purpose part of his salary as tutor, and was permitted, from 1810 to 1812, to complete in Gottingen his astronomical and mineralogical studies. Yet the wish to try his powers as a pedagogue never deserted him; and when, in 1812, the position of teacher in the Plamann Institute in Berlin was offered him, he accepted it. During his leisure hours he devoted himself to gymnastic exercises, and even late in life his eyes sparkled when he spoke of his friend, old Jahn, and the political elevation of Prussia.

When the summons “To my People” called the German youth to war, Froebel had already entered his thirty-first year, but this did not prevent his resigning his office and being one of the first to take up arms. He went to the field with the Lutzow Jagers, and soon after made the acquaintance among his comrades of the theological students Langenthal and Middendorf. When, after the Peace of Paris, the young friends parted, they vowed eternal fidelity, and each solemnly promised to obey the other’s summons, should it ever come. As soon as Froebel took off the dark uniform of the black Jagers he received a position as curator of the museum of mineralogy in the Berlin University, which he filled so admirably that the position of Professor of Mineralogy was offered to him from Sweden. But he declined, for another vocation summoned him which duty and inclination forbade him to refuse.

His brother, a pastor in the Thuringian village of Griesheim on the Ilm, died, leaving three sons who needed an instructor. The widow wished her brother-in-law Friedrich to fill this office, and another brother, a farmer in Osterode, wanted his two boys to join the trio. When Froebel, in the spring of 1817, resigned his position, his friend Langenthal begged him to take his brother Eduard as another pupil, and thus Pestalozzi’s enthusiastic disciple and comrade found his dearest wish fulfilled. He was now the head of his own school for boys, and these first six pupils— as he hoped with the confidence in the star of success peculiar to so many men of genius—must soon increase to twenty. Some of these boys were specially gifted: one became the scholar and politician Julius Froebel, who belonged to the Frankfort Parliament of 1848, and another the Jena Professor of Botany, Eduard Langenthal.

The new principal of the school could not teach alone, but he only needed to remind his old army comrade, Middendorf, of his promise, to induce him to interrupt his studies in Berlin, which were nearly completed, and join him. He also had his eye on Langenthal, if his hope should be fulfilled. He knew what a treasure he would possess for his object in this rare man.

There was great joy in the little Griesheim circle, and the Thuringian (Froebel) did not regret for a moment that he had resigned his secure position; but the Westphalian

(Middendorf) saw here the realization of the ideal which Froebel's kindling words had impressed upon his soul beside many a watch-fire.

Page 4

The character of the two men is admirably described in the following passage from a letter of “the oldest pupil”:

“Both had seen much of the serious side of life, and returned from the war with the higher inspiration which is hallowed by deep religious feeling. The idea of devoting their powers with self-denial and sacrifice to the service of their native land had become a fixed resolution; the devious paths which so many men entered were far from their thoughts. The youth, the young generation of their native land, were alone worthy of their efforts. They meant to train them to a harmonious development of mind and body; and upon these young people their pure spirit of patriotism exerted a vast influence. When we recall the mighty power which Froebel could exercise at pleasure over his fellowmen, and especially over children, we shall deem it natural that a child suddenly transported into this circle could forget its past.”

When I entered it, though at that time it was much modified and established on firm foundations, I met with a similar experience. It was not only the open air, the forest, the life in Nature which so captivated new arrivals at Keilhau, but the moral earnestness and the ideal aspiration which consecrated and ennobled life. Then, too, there was that “nerve-strengthening” patriotism which pervaded everything, filling the place of the superficial philanthropy of the Basedow system of education.

But Froebel’s influence was soon to draw, as if by magnetic power, the man who had formed an alliance with him amid blood and steel, and who was destined to lend the right solidity to the newly erected structure of the institute—I mean Heinrich Langenthal, the most beloved and influential of my teachers, who stood beside Froebel’s inspiring genius and Middendorf’s lovable warmth of feeling as the character, and at the same time the fully developed and trained intellect, whose guidance was so necessary to the institute.

The life of this rare teacher can be followed step by step from the first years of his childhood in his autobiography and many other documents, but I can only attempt here to sketch in broad outlines the character of the man whose influence upon my whole inner life has been, up to the present hour, a decisive one.

The recollection of him makes me inclined to agree with the opinion to which a noble lady sought to convert me—namely, that our lives are far more frequently directed into a certain channel by the influence of an unusual personality than by events, experiences, or individual reflections.

Page 5

Langethal was my teacher for several years. When I knew him he was totally blind, and his eyes, which are said to have flashed so brightly and boldly on the foe in war, and gazed so winningly into the faces of friends in time of peace, had lost their lustre. But his noble features seemed transfigured by the cheerful earnestness which is peculiar to the old man, who, even though only with the eye of the mind, looks back upon a well-spent, worthy life, and who does not fear death, because he knows that God who leads all to the goal allotted by Nature destined him also for no other. His tall figure could vie with Barop's, and his musical voice was unusually deep. It possessed a resistless power when, excited himself, he desired to fill our young souls with his own enthusiasm. The blind old man, who had nothing more to command and direct, moved through our merry, noisy life like a silent admonition to good and noble things. Outside of the lessons he never raised his voice for orders or censure, yet we obediently followed his signs. To be allowed to lead him was an honor and pleasure. He made us acquainted with Homer, and taught us ancient and modern history. To this day I rejoice that not one of us ever thought of using 'pons asinorum,' or copied passage, though he was perfectly sightless, and we were obliged to translate to him and learn by heart whole sections of the Iliad. To have done so would have seemed as shameful as the pillage of an unguarded sanctuary or the abuse of a wounded hero.

And he certainly was one!

We knew this from his comrades in the war and his stories of 1813, which were at once so vivid and so modest.

When he explained Homer or taught ancient history a special fervor animated him; for he was one of the chosen few whose eyes were opened by destiny to the full beauty and sublimity of ancient Greece.

I have listened at the university to many a famous interpreter of the Hellenic and Roman poets, and many a great historian, but not one of them ever gave me so distinct an impression of living with the ancients as Heinrich Langethal. There was something akin to them in his pure, lofty soul, ever thirsting for truth and beauty, and, besides, he had graduated from the school of a most renowned teacher.

The outward aspect of the tall old man was eminently aristocratic, yet his birthplace was the house of a plain though prosperous mechanic. He was born at Erfurt, in 1792. When very young his father, a man unusually sensible and well-informed for his station in life, entrusted him with the education of a younger brother, the one who, as I have mentioned, afterwards became a professor at Jena, and the boy's progress was so rapid that other parents had requested to have their sons share the hours of instruction.

Page 6

After completing his studies at the grammar-school he wanted to go to Berlin, for, though the once famous university still existed in Erfurt, it had greatly deteriorated. His description of it is half lamentable, half amusing, for at that time it was attended by thirty students, for whom seventy professors were employed. Nevertheless, there were many obstacles to be surmounted ere he could obtain permission to attend the Berlin University; for the law required every native of Erfurt, who intended afterwards to aspire to any office, to study at least two years in his native city—at that time French. But, in defiance of all hindrances, he found his way to Berlin, and in 1811 was entered in the university just established there as the first student from Erfurt. He wished to devote himself to theology, and Neander, De Wette, Marheineke, Schleiermacher, *etc.*, must have exerted a great power of attraction over a young man who desired to pursue that study.

At the latter's lectures he became acquainted with Middendorf. At first he obtained little from either. Schleiermacher seemed to him too temporizing and obscure. "He makes veils." He thought the young Westphalian, at their first meeting, merely "a nice fellow." But in time he learned to understand the great theologian, and the "favourite teacher" noticed him and took him into his house.

But first Fichte, and then Friedrich August Wolf, attracted him far more powerfully than Schleiermacher. Whenever he spoke of Wolf his calm features glowed and his blind eyes seemed to sparkle. He owed all that was best in him to the great investigator, who sharpened his pupil's appreciation of the exhaustless store of lofty ideas and the magic of beauty contained in classic antiquity, and had he been allowed to follow his own inclination, he would have turned his back on theology, to devote all his energies to the pursuit of philology and archaeology.

The Homeric question which Wolf had propounded in connection with Goethe, and which at that time stirred the whole learned world, had also moved Langenthal so deeply that, even when an old man, he enjoyed nothing more than to speak of it to us and make us familiar with the pros and cons which rendered him an upholder of his revered teacher. He had been allowed to attend the lectures on the first four books of the Iliad, and—I have living witnesses of the fact—he knew them all verse by verse, and corrected us when we read or recited them as if he had the copy in his hand.

True, he refreshed his naturally excellent memory by having them all read aloud. I shall never forget his joyous mirth as he listened to my delivery of Wolf's translation of Aristophanes's Acharnians; but I was pleased that he selected me to supply the dear blind eyes. Whenever he called me for this purpose he already had the book in the side pocket of his long coat, and when, beckoning significantly, he cried, "Come, Bear," I knew what was before me, and would have gladly resigned the most enjoyable game, though he sometimes had books read which were by no means easy for me to understand. I was then fourteen or fifteen years old.

Page 7

Need I say that it was my intercourse with this man which implanted in my heart the love of ancient days that has accompanied me throughout my life?

The elevation of the Prussian nation led Langenthal also from the university to the war. Rumor first brought to Berlin the tidings of the destruction of the great army on the icy plains of Russia; then its remnants, starving, worn, ragged, appeared in the capital; and the street-boys, who not long before had been forced by the French soldiers to clean their boots, now with little generosity—they were only “street-boys”—shouted sneeringly, “Say, mounseer, want your boots blacked?”

Then came the news of the convention of York, and at last the irresolute king put an end to the doubts and delays which probably stirred the blood of every one who is familiar with Droysen’s classic “Life of Field-Marshal York.” From Breslau came the summons “To my People,” which, like a warm spring wind, melted the ice and woke in the hearts of the German youth a matchless budding and blossoming.

The snow-drops which bloomed during those March days of 1813 ushered in the long-desired day of freedom, and the call “To arms!” found the loudest echo in the hearts of the students. It stirred the young, yet even in those days circumspect Langenthal, too, and showed him his duty. But difficulties confronted him; for Pastor Ritschel, a native of Erfurt, to whom he confided his intention, warned him not to write to his father. Erfurt, his own birthplace, was still under French rule, and were he to communicate his plan in writing and the letter should be opened in the “black room,” with other suspicious mail matter, it might cost the life of the man whose son was preparing to commit high-treason by fighting against the ruler of his country—Napoleon, the Emperor of France.

“Where will you get the uniform, if your father won’t help you, and you want to join the black Jagers?” asked the pastor, and received the answer:

“The cape of my cloak will supply the trousers. I can have a red collar put on my cloak, my coat can be dyed black and turned into a uniform, and I have a hanger.”

“That’s right!” cried the worthy minister, and gave his young friend ten thalers.

Middendorf, too, reported to the Lutzow Jagers at once, and so did the son of Professor Bellermann, and their mutual friend Bauer, spite of his delicate health which seemed to unfit him for any exertion.

They set off on the 11th of April, and while the spring was budding alike in the outside world and in young breasts, a new flower of friendship expanded in the hearts of these three champions of the same sacred cause; for Langenthal and Middendorf found their Froebel. This was in Dresden, and the league formed there was never to be dissolved. They kept their eyes fixed steadfastly on the ideals of youth, until in old age the sight of all three failed. Part of the blessings which were promised to the nation when they set

forth to battle they were permitted to see seven lustra later, in 1848, but they did not live to experience the realization of their fairest youthful dream, the union of Germany.



Page 8

I must deny myself the pleasure of describing the battles and the marches of the Lutzow corps, which extended to Aachen and Oudenarde; but will mention here that Langethal rose to the rank of sergeant, and had to perform the duties of a first lieutenant; and that, towards the end of the campaign, Middendorf was sent with Lieutenant Reil to induce Blucher to receive the corps in his vanguard. The old commander gratified their wish; they had proved their fitness for the post when they won the victory at the Gohrde, where two thousand Frenchmen were killed and as many more taken prisoners. The sight of the battlefield had seemed unendurable to the gentle nature of Middendorf he had formed a poetical idea of the campaign as an expedition against the hereditary foe. Now that he had confronted the bloodstained face of war with all its horrors, he fell into a state of melancholy from which he could scarcely rouse himself.

After this battle the three friends were quartered in Castle Gohrde, and there enjoyed a delightful season of rest after months of severe hardships. Their corps had been used as the extreme vanguard against Davoust's force, which was thrice their superior in numbers, and in consequence they were subjected to great fatigues. They had almost forgotten how it seemed to sleep in a bed and eat at a table. One night march had followed another. They had often seized their food from the kettles and eaten it at the next stopping-place, but all was cheerfully done; the light-heartedness of youth did not vanish from their enthusiastic hearts. There was even no lack of intellectual aliment, for a little field-library had been established by the exchange of books. Langethal told us of his night's rest in a ditch, which was to entail disastrous consequences. Utterly exhausted, sleep overpowered him in the midst of a pouring rain, and when he awoke he discovered that he was up to his neck in water. His damp bed—the ditch—had gradually filled, but the sleep was so profound that even the rising moisture had not roused him. The very next morning he was attacked with a disease of the eyes, to which he attributed his subsequent blindness.

On the 26th of August there was a prospect of improvement in the condition of the corps. Davoust had sent forty wagons of provisions to Hamburg, and the men were ordered to capture them. The attack was successful, but at what a price! Theodor Korner, the noble young poet whose songs will commemorate the deeds of the Lutzow corps so long as German men and boys sing his "Thou Sword at my Side," or raise their voices in the refrain of the Lutzow Jagers' song:

"Do you ask the name of yon reckless band?
'Tis Lutzow's black troopers dashing swift through the land!"

Langethal first saw the body of the author of "Lyre and Sword" and "Zriny" under an oak at Wobbelin; but he was to see it once more under quite different circumstances. He has mentioned it in his autobiography, and I have heard him describe several times his visit to the corpse of Theodor Korner.



Page 9

He had been quartered in Wobbelin, and shared his room with an Oberjager von Behrenhorst, son of the postmaster-general in Dessau, who had taken part in the battle of Jena as a young lieutenant and returned home with a darkened spirit.

At the summons "To my People," he had enlisted at once as a private soldier in the Lutzow corps, where he rose rapidly to the rank of Oberjager. During the war he had often met Langethal and Middendorf; but the quiet, reserved man, prematurely grave for his years, attached himself so closely to Korner that he needed no other friend.

After the death of the poet on the 26th of August, 1813, he moved silently about as though completely crushed. On the night which followed the 27th he invited his roommate Langethal to go with him to the body of his friend. Both went first to the village church, where the dead Jagers lay in two long black rows. A solemn stillness pervaded the little house of God, which had become during this night the abode of death, and the nocturnal visitors gazed silently at the pallid, rigid features of one lifeless young form after another, but without finding him whom they sought.

During this mute review of corpses it seemed to Langethal as if Death were singing a deep, heartrending choral, and he longed to pray for these young, crushed human blossoms; but his companion led the way into the guard's little room. There lay the poet, "the radiance of an angel on his face," though his body bore many traces of the fury of the battle. Deeply moved, Langethal stood gazing down upon the form of the man who had died for his native land, while Behrenhorst knelt on the floor beside him, silently giving himself up to the anguish of his soul. He remained in this attitude a long time, then suddenly started up, threw his arms upward, and exclaimed, "Korner, I'll follow you!"

With these words Behrenhorst darted out of the little room into the darkness; and a few weeks after he, too, had fallen for the sacred cause of his native land.

They had seen another beloved comrade perish in the battle of Gohrde, a handsome young man of delicate figure and an unusually reserved manner.

Middendorf, with whom he—his name was Prohaska—had been on more intimate terms than the others, once asked him, when he timidly avoided the girls and women who cast kindly glances at him, if his heart never beat faster, and received the answer, "I have but one love to give, and that belongs to our native land."

While the battle was raging, Middendorf was fighting close beside his comrade. When the enemy fired a volley the others stooped, but Prohaska stood erect, exclaiming, when he was warned, "No bowing! I'll make no obeisance to the French!"

A few minutes after, the brave soldier, stricken by a bullet, fell on the greensward. His friends bore him off the field, and Prohaska—Eleonore Prohaska—proved to be a girl!



Page 10

While in Castle Gohrde, Froebel talked with his friends about his favourite plan, which he had already had a view in Gottingen, of establishing a school for boys, and while developing his educational ideal to them and at the same time mentioning that he had passed his thirtieth birthday, and alluding to the postponement of his plan by the war, he exclaimed, to explain why he had taken up arms:

“How can I train boys whose devotion I claim, unless I have proved by my own deeds how a man should show devotion to the general welfare?”

These words made a deep impression upon the two friends, and increased Middendorf’s enthusiastic reverence for the older comrade, whose experiences and ideas had opened a new world to him.

The Peace of Paris, and the enrolment of the Lutzow corps in the line, brought the trio back to Berlin to civil life.

There also each frequently sought the others, until, in the spring of 1817, Froebel resigned the permanent position in the Bureau of Mineralogy in order to establish his institute.

Middendorf had been bribed by the saying of his admired friend that he “had found the unity of life.” It gave the young philosopher food for thought, and, because he felt that he had vainly sought this unity and was dissatisfied, he hoped to secure it through the society of the man who had become everything to him. His wish was fulfilled, for as an educator he grew as it were into his own motto, “Lucid, genuine, and true to life.”

Middendorf gave up little when he followed Froebel.

The case was different with Langethal. He had entered as a tutor the Bendemann household at Charlottenburg, where he found a second home. He taught with brilliant success children richly gifted in mind and heart, whose love he won. It was “a glorious family” which permitted him to share its rich social life, and in whose highly gifted circle he could be sure of finding warm sympathy in his intellectual interests. Protected from all external anxieties, he had under their roof ample leisure for industrious labour and also for intercourse with his own friends.

In July, 1817, he passed the last examination with the greatest distinction, receiving the “very good,” rarely bestowed; and a brilliant career lay before him.

Directly after this success three pulpits were offered to him, but he accepted neither, because he longed for rest and quiet occupation.

The summons from Froebel to devote himself to his infant institute, where Langethal had placed his younger brother, also reached him. The little school moved on St. John’s Day, 1817, from Griesheim to Keilhau, where the widow of Pastor Froebel had been



offered a larger farm. The place which she and her children's teacher found was wonderfully adapted to Froebel's purpose, and seemed to promise great advantages both to the pupils and to the institute. There was much building and arranging to be accomplished, but means to do so were obtained, and the first pupil described very amusingly the entrance into the new home, the furnishing, the discovery of all the beauties and advantages which we found as an old possession in Keilhau, and the endeavour, so characteristic of Middendorf, to adapt even the less attractive points to his own poetic ideas.

Page 11

Only the hours of instruction fared badly, and Froebel felt that he needed a man of fully developed strength in order to give the proper foundation to the instruction of the boys who were entrusted to his care. He knew a man of this stamp in the student F. A. Wolfs, whose talent for teaching had been admirably proved in the Bendemann family.

“Langethal,” as the first pupil describes him, was at that time a very handsome man of five-and-twenty years. His brow was grave, but his features expressed kindness of heart, gentleness, and benevolence. The dignity of his whole bearing was enhanced by the sonorous tones of his voice—he retained them until old age—and his whole manner revealed manly firmness. Middendorf was more pleasing to women, Langethal to men. Middendorf attracted those who saw, Langethal those who heard him, and the confidence he inspired was even more lasting than that aroused by Middendorf.

What marvel that Froebel made every effort to win this rare power for the young institute? But Langethal declined, to the great vexation of Middendorf. Diesterweg called the latter “a St. John,” but our dear, blind teacher added, “And Froebel was his Christus.”

The enthusiastic young Westphalian, who had once believed he saw in this man every masculine virtue, and whose life appeared emblematical, patiently accepted everything, and considered every one a “renegade” who had ever followed Froebel and did not bow implicitly to his will. So he was angered by Langethal’s refusal. The latter had been offered, with brilliant prospects for the present and still fairer ones for the future, a position as a tutor in Silesia, a place which secured him the rest he desired, combined with occupation suited to his tastes. He was to share the labour of teaching with another instructor, who was to take charge of the exact sciences, with which he was less familiar, and he was also permitted to teach his brother with the young Counts Stolberg.

He accepted, but before going to Silesia he wished to visit his Keilhau friends and take his brother away with him. He did so, and the “diplomacy” with which Froebel succeeded in changing the decision of the resolute young man and gaining him over to his own interests, is really remarkable. It won for the infant institute in the person of Langethal— if the expression is allowable—the backbone.

Froebel had sent Middendorf to meet his friend, and the latter, on the way, told him of the happiness which he had found in his new home and occupation. Then they entered Keilhau, and the splendid landscape which surrounds it needs no praise.

Froebel received his former comrade with the utmost cordiality, and the sight of the robust, healthy, merry boys who were lying on the floor that evening, building forts and castles with the wooden blocks which Froebel had had made for them according to his own plan, excited the keenest interest. He had come to take his brother away; but when he saw him, among other happy companions of his own age, complete the finest

structure of all—a Gothic cathedral—it seemed almost wrong to tear the child from this circle.

Page 12

He gazed sadly at his brother when he came to bid him “good-night,” and then remained alone with Froebel. The latter was less talkative than usual, waiting for his friend to tell him of the future which awaited him in Silesia. When he heard that a second tutor was to relieve Langenthal of half his work, he exclaimed, with the greatest anxiety:

“You do not know him, and yet intend to finish a work of education with him? What great chances you are hazarding!”

The next morning Froebel asked his friend what goal in life he had set before him, and Langenthal replied:

“Like the apostle, I would fain proclaim the gospel to all men according to the best of my powers, in order to bring them into close communion with the Redeemer.”

Froebel answered, thoughtfully:

“If you desire that, you must, like the apostles, know men. You must be able to enter into the life of every one—here a peasant, there a mechanic. If you can not, do not hope for success; your influence will not extend far.”

How wise and convincing the words sounded! And Froebel touched the sensitive spot in the young minister, who was thoroughly imbued with the sacred beauty of his life-task, yet certainly knew the Gospels, his classic authors, and apostolic fathers much better than he did the world.

He thoughtfully followed Froebel, who, with Middendorf and the boys, led him up the Steiger, the mountain whose summit afforded the magnificent view I have described. It was the hour when the setting sun pours its most exquisite light over the mountains and valleys. The heart of the young clergyman, tortured by anxious doubts, swelled at the sight of this magnificence, and Froebel, seeing what was passing in his mind, exclaimed:

“Come, comrade, let us have one of our old war-songs.”

The musical “black Jager” of yore willingly assented; and how clearly and enthusiastically the chorus of boyish voices chimed in!

When it died away, the older man passed his arm around his friend’s shoulders, and, pointing to the beautiful region lying before them in the sunset glow, exclaimed:

“Why seek so far away what is close at hand? A work is established here which must be built by the hand of God! Implicit devotion and self-sacrifice are needed.”



While speaking, he gazed steadfastly into his friend's tearful eyes, as if he had found his true object in life, and when he held out his hand Langenthal clasped it—he could not help it.

That very day a letter to the Counts Stolberg informed them that they must seek another tutor for their sons, and Froebel and Keilhau could congratulate themselves on having gained their Langenthal.

Page 13

The management of the school was henceforward in the hands of a man of character, while the extensive knowledge and the excellent method of a well-trained scholar had been obtained for the educational department. The new institute now prospered rapidly. The renown of the fresh, healthful life and the able tuition of the pupils spread far beyond the limits of Thuringia. The material difficulties with which the head-master had had to struggle after the erection of the large new buildings were also removed when Froebel's prosperous brother in Osterode decided to take part in the work and move to Keilhau. He understood farming, and, by purchasing more land and woodlands, transformed the peasant holding into a considerable estate.

When Froebel's restless spirit drew him to Switzerland to undertake new educational enterprises, and some one was needed who could direct the business management, Barop, the steadfast man of whom I have already spoken, was secured. Deeply esteemed and sincerely beloved, he managed the institute during the time that we three brothers were pupils there. He had found many things within to arrange on a more practical foundation, many without to correct: for the long locks of most of the pupils; the circumstance that three Lutzen Jagers, one of whom had delivered the oration at a students' political meeting, had established the school; that Barop had been persecuted as a demagogue on account of his connection with a students' political society; and, finally, Froebel's relations with Switzerland and the liberal educational methods of the school, had roused the suspicions of the Berlin demagogue-hunters, and therefore demagogic tendencies, from which in reality it had always held aloof, were attributed to the institute.

Yes, we were free, in so far that everything which could restrict or retard our physical and mental development was kept away from us, and our teachers might call themselves so because, with virile energy, they had understood how to protect the institute from every injurious and narrowing outside influence. The smallest and the largest pupil was free, for he was permitted to be wholly and entirely his natural self, so long as he kept within the limits imposed by the existing laws. But license was nowhere more sternly prohibited than at Keilhau; and the deep religious feeling of its head-masters—Barop, Langenthal, and Middendorf—ought to have taught the suspicious spies in Berlin that the command, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," would never be violated here.

The time I spent in Keilhau was during the period of the worst reaction, and I now know that our teachers would have sat on the Left in the Prussian Landtag; yet we never heard a disrespectful word spoken of Frederick William IV, and we were instructed to show the utmost respect to the prince of the little country of Rudolstadt to which Keilhau belonged. Barop, spite of his liberal tendencies, was highly esteemed

Page 14

by this petty sovereign, decorated with an order, and raised to the rank of Councillor of Education. From a hundred isolated recollections and words which have lingered in my memory I have gathered that our teachers were liberals in a very moderate way, yet they were certainly guilty of “demagogic aspirations” in so far as that they desired for their native land only what we, thank Heaven, now possess its unity, and a popular representation, by a free election of all its states, in a German Parliament. What enthusiasm for the Emperor William, Bismarck, and Von Moltke, Langenthal, Middendorf, and Barop would have inspired in our hearts had they been permitted to witness the great events of 1870 and 1871!

Besides, politics were kept from us, and this had become known in wider circles when we entered the institute, for most of the pupils belonged to loyal families. Many were sons of the higher officials, officers, and landed proprietors; and as long locks had long since become the exception, and the Keilhau pupils were as well mannered as possible, many noblemen, among them chamberlains and other court officials, decided to send their boys to the institute.

The great manufacturers and merchants who placed their sons in the institute were also not men favourable to revolution, and many of our comrades became officers in the German army. Others are able scholars, clergymen, and members of Parliament; others again government officials, who fill high positions; and others still are at the head of large industrial or mercantile enterprises. I have not heard of a single individual who has gone to ruin, and of very many who have accomplished things really worthy of note. But wherever I have met an old pupil of Keilhau, I have found in him the same love for the institute, have seen his eyes sparkle more brightly when we talked of Langenthal, Middendorf, and Barop. Not one has turned out a sneak or a hypocrite.

The present institution is said to be an admirable one; but the “Realschule” of Keilhau, which has been forced to abandon its former humanistic foundation, can scarcely train to so great a variety of callings the boys now entrusted to its care.

CHAPTER XIV.

The little country of Rudolstadt in which Keilhau lies had had its revolution, though it was but a small and bloodless one. True, the insurrection had nothing to do with human beings, but involved the destruction of living creatures. Greater liberty in hunting was demanded.

This might seem a trivial matter, yet it was of the utmost importance to both disputants. The wide forests of the country had hitherto been the hunting-grounds of the prince, and not a gun could be fired there without his permission. To give up these “happy hunting-



grounds” was a severe demand upon the eager sportsman who occupied the Rudolstadt throne, and the rustic population would gladly have spared him had it been possible.



Page 15

But the game in Rudolstadt had become a veritable torment, which destroyed the husbandmen's hopes of harvests. The peasant, to save his fields from the stags and does which broke into them in herds at sunset, tried to keep them out by means of clappers and bad odours. I have seen and smelled the so-called "Frenchman's oil" with which the posts were smeared, that its really diabolical odour—I don't know from what horrors it was compounded—might preserve the crops. The ornament of the forests had become the object of the keenest hate, and as soon as—shortly before we entered Keilhau—hunting was freely permitted, the peasants gave full vent to their rage, set off for the woods with the old muskets they had kept hidden in the garrets, or other still more primitive weapons, and shot or struck down all the game they encountered. Roast venison was cheap for weeks on Rudolstadt tables, and the pupils had many an unexpected pleasure.

The hunting exploits of the older scholars were only learned by us younger ones as secrets, and did not reach the teachers' ears until long after.

But the woods furnished other pleasures besides those enjoyed by the sportsman. Every ramble through the forest enriched our knowledge of plants and animals, and I soon knew the different varieties of stones also; yet we did not suspect that this knowledge was imparted according to a certain system. We were taught as it were by stealth, and how many pleasant, delicious things attracted us to the class-rooms on the wooded heights!

Vegetation was very abundant in the richly watered mountain valley. Our favourite spring was the Schaalbach at the foot of the Steiger,—[We pupils bought it of the peasant who owned it and gave it to Barop.]—because there was a fowling-floor connected with it, where I spent many a pleasant evening. It could be used only after breeding-time, and consisted of a hut built of boughs where the birdcatcher lodged. Flowing water rippled over the little wooden rods on which the feathered denizens of the woods alighted to quench their thirst before going to sleep. When some of them—frequently six at a time—had settled on the perches in the trough, it was drawn into the but by a rope, a net was spread over the water and there was nothing more to do except take the captives out.

The name of the director of this amusement was Merbod. He could imitate the voices of all the birds, and was a merry, versatile fellow, who knew how to do a thousand things, and of whom we boys were very fond.

The peasant Bredernitz often took us to his crow-hut, which was a hole in the ground covered with boughs and pieces of turf, where the hunters lay concealed. The owl, which lured the crows and other birds of prey, was fastened on a perch, and when they flew up, often in large flocks, to tease the old cross-patch which sat blinking angrily, they were shot down from loop-holes which had been left in the hut. The hawks which prey upon doves and hares, the crows and magpies, can thus easily be decimated.



Page 16

We had learned to use our guns in the playground. The utmost caution was enforced, and although, as I have already remarked, we handled our own guns when we were only lads of twelve years old, I can not recall a single accident which occurred.

Once, during the summer, there was a Schutzenfest, in which a large wooden eagle was shot from the pole. Whoever brought down the last splinter became king. This honour once fell to my share, and I was permitted to choose a queen. I crowned Marie Breimann, a pretty, slender young girl from Brunswick, whose Greek profile and thick silken hair had captivated my fancy. She and Adelheid Barop, the head-master's daughter, were taught in our classes, but Marie attracted me more strongly than the diligent Keilhau lassies with their beautiful black eyes and the other two blooming and graceful Westphalian girls who were also schoolmates. But the girls occupied a very small place in our lives. They could neither wrestle, shoot, nor climb, so we gave them little thought, and anything like actual flirtation was unknown—we had so many better things in our heads. Wrestling and other sports threw everything else into the shade. Pretty Marie, however, probably suspected which of my school-mates I liked best, and up to the time of my leaving the institute I allowed no other goddess to rival her. But there were plenty of amusements at Keilhau besides bird-shooting.

I will mention the principal ones which came during the year, for to describe them in regular order would be impossible.

Of the longer walks which we took in the spring and summer the most beautiful was the one leading through Blankenburg to the entrance of the Schwarzathal, and thence through the lofty, majestically formed group of cliffs at whose foot the clear, swift Schwarza flows, dashing and foaming, to Schwarzburg.

How clearly our songs echoed from the granite walls of the river valley, and how lively it always was at "The Stag," whose landlord possessed a certain power of attraction to us boys in his own person; for, as the stoutest man in Thuringia, he was a feast for the eyes! His jollity equalled his corpulence, and how merrily he used to jest with us lads!

Of the shorter expeditions I will mention only the two we took most frequently, which led us in less than an hour to Blankenburg or Greifenstein, a large ruin, many parts of which were in tolerable preservation. It had been the home of Count Gunther von Schwarzburg, who paid with his life for the honour of wearing the German imperial crown a few short months.



Page 17

We also enjoyed being sent to the little town of Blankenburg on errands, for it was the home of our drawing-master, the artist Unger, one of those original characters whom we rarely meet now. When we knew him, the handsome, broad-shouldered man, with his thick red beard, looked as one might imagine Odin. Summer and winter his dress was a grey woollen jacket, into which a short pipe was thrust, and around his hips a broad leather belt, from which hung a bag containing his drawing materials. He cared nothing for public opinion, and, as an independent bachelor, desired nothing except “to be let alone,” for he professed the utmost contempt for the corrupt brood yclept “mankind.” He never came to our entertainments, probably because he would be obliged to wear something in place of his woollen jacket, and because he avoided women, whom he called “the roots of all evil.” I still remember how once, after emptying the vials of his wrath upon mankind, he said, in reply to the question whether he included Barop among the iniquitous brood, “Why, of course not; he doesn’t belong to it!”

There was no lack of opportunity to visit him, for a great many persons employed to work for the school lived in Blankenburg, and we were known to be carefully watched there.

I remember two memorable expeditions to the little town. Once my brother burned his arm terribly during a puppet-show by the explosion of some powder provided for the toy cannon.

The poor fellow suffered so severely that I could not restrain my tears, and though it was dark, and snow lay on the mountains, off I went to Blankenburg to get the old surgeon, calling to some of my school-mates at the door to tell them of my destination. It was no easy matter to wade through the snow; but, fortunately, the stars gave me sufficient light to keep in the right path as I dashed down the mountain to Blankenburg. How often I plunged into ditches filled with snow and slid down short descents I don’t know; but as I write these lines I can vividly remember the relief with which I at last trod the pavement of the little town. Old Wetzel was at home, and a carriage soon conveyed us over the only road to the institute. I was not punished. Barop only laid his hand on my head, and said, “I am glad you are back again, Bear.”

Another trip to Blankenburg entailed results far more serious—nay, almost cost me my life.

I was then fifteen, and one Sunday afternoon I went with Barop’s permission to visit the Hamburgers, but on condition that I should return by nine o’clock at latest.

Time, however, slipped by in pleasant conversation until a later hour, and as thunder-clouds were rising my host tried to keep me overnight. But I thought this would not be allowable, and, armed with an umbrella, I set off along the road, with which I was perfectly familiar.



Page 18

But the storm soon burst, and it grew so dark that, except when the lightning flashed, I could not see my hand before my face. Yet on I went, though wondering that the path along which I groped my way led upward, until the lightning showed me that, by mistake, I had taken the road to Greifenstein. I turned back, and while feeling my way through the gloom the earth seemed to vanish under my feet, and I plunged headlong into a viewless gulf—not through empty space, however, but a wet, tangled mass which beat against my face, until at last there was a jerk which shook me from head to foot.

I no longer fell, but I heard above me the sound of something tearing, and the thought darted through my mind that I was hanging by my trousers. Groping around, I found vine-leaves, branches, and lattice-work, to which I clung, and tearing away with my foot the cloth which had caught on the end of a lath, I again brought my head where it should be, and discovered that I was hanging on a vine-clad wall. A flash of lightning showed me the ground not very far below and, by the help of the espalier and the vines I at last stood in a garden.

Almost by a miracle I escaped with a few scratches; but when I afterwards went to look at the scene of this disaster cold chills ran down my back, for half the distance whence I plunged into the garden would have been enough to break my neck.

Our games were similar to those which lads of the same age play now, but there were some additional ones that could only take place in a wooded mountain valley like Keilhau; such, for instance, were our Indian games, which engrossed us at the time when we were pleased with Cooper's "Leather-Stocking," but I need not describe them.

When I was one of the older pupils a party of us surprised some "Panzen" —as we called the younger ones—one hot afternoon engaged in a very singular game of their own invention. They had undressed to the skin in the midst of the thickest woods and were performing Paradise and the Fall of Man, as they had probably just been taught in their religious lesson. For the expulsion of Adam and our universal mother Eve, the angel—in this case there were two of them—used, instead of the flaming sword, stout hazel rods, with which they performed their part of warders so overzealously that a quarrel followed, which we older ones stopped.

Thus many bands of pupils invented games of their own, but, thank Heaven, rarely devised such absurdities. Our later Homeric battles any teacher would have witnessed with pleasure. Froebel would have greeted them as signs of creative imagination and "individual life" in the boys.

CHAPTER XV.

SUMMER PLEASURES AND RAMBLES

Wholly unlike these, genuinely and solely a product of Keilhau, was the great battle-game which we called Bergwacht, one of my brightest memories of those years.



Page 19

Long preparations were needed, and these, too, were delightful.

On the wooded plain at the summit of the Kolm, a mountain which belonged mainly to the institute, war was waged during the summer every Saturday evening until far into the night, whenever the weather was fine, which does not happen too often in Thuringia.

The whole body of pupils was divided into three, afterwards into four sections, each of which had its own citadel. After two had declared war against two others, the battle raged until one party captured the strongholds of the other. This was done as soon as a combatant had set foot on the hearth of a hostile fortress.

The battle itself was fought with stakes blunted at the tops. Every one touched by the weapon of an enemy must declare himself a prisoner. To admit this, whenever it happened, was a point of honour.

In order to keep all the combatants in action, a fourth division was added soon after our arrival, and of course it was necessary to build a strong hold like the others. This consisted of a hut with a stone roof, in which fifteen or twenty boys could easily find room and rest, a strong wall which protected us up to our foreheads, and surrounded the front of the citadel in a semicircle, as well as a large altar-like hearth which rose in the midst of the semicircular space surrounded by the wall.

We built this fortress ourselves, except that our teacher of handicrafts, the sapper Sabum, sometimes gave us a hint. The first thing was to mark out the plan, then with the aid of levers pry the rocks out of the fields, and by means of a two-wheeled cart convey them to the site chosen, fit them neatly together, stuff the interstices with moss, and finally put on a roof made of pine logs which we felled ourselves, earth, moss, and branches.

How quickly we learned to use the plummet, take levels, hew the stone, wield the axes! And what a delight it was when the work was finished and we saw our own building! Perhaps we might not have accomplished it without the sapper, but every boy believed that if he were cast, like Robinson Crusoe, on a desert island, he could build a hut of his own.

As soon as this citadel was completed, preparations for the impending battle were made. The walls and encircling walls of all were prepared, and we were drilled in the use of the poles. This, too, afforded us the utmost pleasure. Touching the head of an enemy was strictly prohibited; yet many a slight wound was given while fighting in the gloom of the woods.

Each of the four Bergwachts had its leader. The captain of the first was director of the whole game, and instead of a lance wore a rapier. I considered it a great honour when this dignity was conferred on me. One of its consequences was that my portrait was

sketched by “Old Unger” in the so-called “Bergwacht Book,” which contained the likenesses of all my predecessors.

Page 20

During the summer months all eyes, even as early as Thursday, were watching the weather. When Saturday evening proved pleasant and Barop had given his consent, there was great rejoicing in the institute, and the morning hours must have yielded the teachers little satisfaction.

Directly after dinner everybody seized his pole and the other “Bergwacht” equipments. The alliances were formed under the captain’s guidance. We will say that the contest was to begin with the first and third Bergwacht pitted against the second and fourth, and be followed by another, with the first and second against the third and fourth.

We assembled in the court-yard just before sunset. Barop made a little speech, exhorting us to fight steadily, and especially to observe all the rules and yield ourselves captives as soon as an enemy’s pole touched us. He never neglected on these occasions to admonish us that, should our native land ever need the armed aid of her sons, we should march to battle as joyously as we now did to the Bergwacht, which was to train us to skill in her defence.

Then the procession set off in good order, four or six pupils harnessing themselves voluntarily to the cart in which the kegs of beer were dragged up the Kolm. Off we went, singing merrily, and at the top the women were waiting for us with a lunch. Then the warriors scattered, the fire was lighted on every hearth, the plan of battle was discussed, some were sent out to reconnoitre, others kept to defend the citadel.

At last the conflict began. Could I ever forget the scenes in the forest! No Indian tribe on the war-path ever strained every sense more keenly to watch, surround, and surprise the foe. And the hand-to-hand fray! What delight it was to burst from the shelter of the thicket and touch with our poles two, three, or four of the surprised enemies ere they thought of defence! And what self-denial it required when—spite of the most skilful parry—we felt the touch of the pole, to confess it, and be led off as a prisoner!

Voices and shouts echoed through the woods, and the glare of five fires pierced the darkness—five—for flames were also blazing where the women were cooking the supper. But the light was brightest, the shouts of the combatants were loudest, in the vicinity of the forts. The effort of the besiegers was to spy out unguarded places, and occupy the attention of the garrison so that a comrade might leap over the wall and set his foot on the hearth. The object of the garrison was to prevent this.

What was that? An exulting cry rang through the night air. A warrior had succeeded in penetrating the hostile citadel untouched and setting his foot on the hearth!



Page 21

Two or three times we enjoyed the delight of battle; and when towards midnight it closed, we threw ourselves-glowing from the strife and blackened by the smoke of the hearth-fires-down on the greensward around the women's fire, where boiled eggs and other good things were served, and meanwhile the mugs of foaming beer were passed around the circle. One patriotic song after another was sung, and at last each Bergwacht withdrew to its citadel and lay down on the moss to sleep under the sheltering roof. Two sentinels marched up and down, relieved every half hour until the early dawn of the summer Sunday brightened the eastern sky.

Then "Huup!"—the Keilhau shout which summoned us back to the institute-rang out, and a hymn, the march back, a bath in the pond, and finally the most delicious rest, if good luck permitted, on the heaps of hay which had not been gathered in. On the Sunday following the Bergwacht we were not required to attend church, where we should merely have gone to sleep. Barop, though usually very strict in the observance of religious duties, never demanded anything for the sake of mere appearances.

And the bed of my own planning! It consisted of wood and stones, and was covered with a thick layer of moss, raised at the head in a slanting direction. It looked like other beds, but the place where it stood requires some description, for it was a Keilhau specialty, a favour bestowed by our teachers on the pupils.

Midway up the slope of the Kolm where our citadels stood, on the side facing the institute, each boy had a piece of ground where he might build, dig, or plant, as he chose. They descended from one to another: Ludo's and mine had come down from Martin and another pupil who left the school at the same time. But I was not satisfied with what my predecessors had created. I spared the beautiful vine which twined around a fir-tree, but in the place of a flower-bed and a bench which I found there Ludo and I built a hearth, and for myself the bed already mentioned, which my brother of course was permitted to occupy with me.

How many hours I have spent on its soft cushions, reading or dreaming or imagining things! If I could only remember them as they hovered before me, what epics and tales I could write!

No doubt we ought to be grateful to God for this as well as for so many other blessings; but why are we permitted to be young only once in our lives, only once to be borne aloft on the wings of a tireless power of imagination, so easily satisfied with ourselves, so full of love, faith, and hope, so open to every joy and so blind to every care and doubt, and everything which threatens to cloud and extinguish the sunlight in the soul?

Dear bed in my plot of ground at Keilhau, you ought, in accordance with a remark of Barop, to cause me serious self-examination, for he said, probably with no thought of my mossy couch, "From the way in which the pupils use their plots of ground and the things they place in them, I can form a very correct opinion of their dispositions and



tastes.” But you, beloved couch, should have the best place in my garden if you could restore me but for one half hour the dreams which visited me on your grey-green pillows, when I was a lad of fourteen or fifteen.



Page 22

I have passed over the Rudolstadt Schutzenfest, its music, its merry-go-round, and the capital sausages cooked in the open air, and have intentionally omitted many other delightful things. I cannot help wondering now where we found time for all these summer pleasures.

True, with the exception of a few days at Whitsuntide, we had no vacation from Easter until the first of September. But even in August one thought, one joyous anticipation, filled every heart. The annual autumn excursion was coming!

After we were divided into travelling parties and had ascertained which teacher was to accompany us—a matter that seemed very important—we diligently practised the most beautiful songs; and on many an evening Barop or Middendorf told us of the places through which we were to pass, their history, and the legends which were associated with them. They were aided in this by one of the sub-teachers, Bagge, a poetically gifted young clergyman, who possessed great personal beauty and a heart capable of entering into the intellectual life of the boys who were entrusted to his care.

He instructed us in the German language and literature. Possibly because he thought that he discovered in me a talent for poetic expression, he showed me unusual favor, even read his own verses aloud to me, and set me special tasks in verse-writing, which he criticised with me when I had finished. The first long poem I wrote of my own impulse was a description of the wonderful forms assumed by the stalactite formations in the Sophie Cave in Switzerland, which we had visited. Unfortunately, the book containing it is lost, but I remember the following lines, referring to the industrious sprites which I imagined as the sculptors of the wondrous shapes:

“Priestly robes and a high altar the sprites created here,
And in the rock-hewn cauldron poured the holy water clear,
Within whose depths reflected, by the torches’ flickering rays,
Beneath the surface glimmering my own face met my gaze;
And when I thus beheld it, so small it seemed to me,
That yonder stone-carved giant looked on with mocking glee.
Ay, laugh, if that’s your pleasure, Goliath huge and old,
I soon shall fare forth singing, you still your place must hold.”

Another sub-teacher was also a favourite travelling-companion. His name was Schaffner, and he, too, with his thick, black beard, was a handsome man. To those pupils who, like my brother Ludo, were pursuing the study of the sciences, he, the mathematician of the institute, must have been an unusually clear and competent teacher. I was under his charge only a short time, and his branch of knowledge was unfortunately my weak point. Shortly before my departure he married a younger sister of Barop’s wife, and established an educational institution very similar to Keilhau at Gumperda, at Schwarza in Thuringia.

Page 23

Herr Vodoz, our French teacher, a cheery, vigorous Swiss, with a perfect forest of curls on his head, was also one of the most popular guides; and so was Dr. Budstedt, who gave instruction in the classics. He was not a handsome man, but he deserved the name of “anima candida.” He used to storm at the slightest occasion, but he was quickly appeased again. As a teacher I think he did his full duty, but I no longer remember anything about his methods.

The travelling party which Barop accompanied were very proud of the honour. Middendorf’s age permitted him to go only with the youngest pupils, who made the shortest trips.

These excursions led the little boys into the Thuringian Forest, the Hartz Mountains, Saxony and Bohemia, Nuremberg and Wurzburg, and the older ones by way of Baireuth and Regensburg to Ulm. The large boys in the first travelling party, which was usually headed by Barop himself, extended their journey as far as Switzerland.

I visited in after-years nearly all the places to which we went at that time, and some, with which important events in my life were associated, I shall mention later. It would not be easy to reproduce from memory the first impressions received without mingling with them more recent ones.

Thus, I well remember how Nuremberg affected me and how much it pleased me. I express this in my description of the journey; but in the author of Gred, who often sought this delightful city, and made himself familiar with life there in the days of its mediaval prosperity, these childish impressions became something wholly new. And yet they are inseparable from the conception and contents of the Nuremberg novel.

My mother kept the old books containing the accounts of these excursions, which occupied from two to three weeks, and they possessed a certain interest for me, principally because they proved how skilfully our teachers understood how to carry out Froebel’s principles on these occasions. Our records of travel also explain in detail what this educator meant by the words “unity with life”; for our attention was directed not only to beautiful views or magnificent works of art and architecture, but to noteworthy public institutions or great manufactories. Our teachers took the utmost care that we should understand what we saw.

The cultivation of the fields, the building of the peasants’ huts, the national costumes, were all brought under our notice, thus making us familiar with life outside of the school, and opening our eyes to things concerning which the pupil of an ordinary model grammar-school rarely inquires, yet which are of great importance to the world to which we belong.

Our material life was sensibly arranged. During the rest at noon a cold lunch was served, and an abundant hot meal was not enjoyed until evening.

In the large cities we dined at good hotels at the table d'hote, and—as in Dresden, Prague, and Coburg—were taken to the theatre.



Page 24

But we often spent the night in the villages, and then chairs were turned upside down, loose straw was spread on the backs and over the floor, and, wrapped in the shawl which almost every boy carried buckled to his knapsack, we slept, only half undressed, as comfortably as in the softest bed.

While walking we usually sung songs, among them very nonsensical ones, if only we could keep step well to their time. Often one of the teachers told us a story. Schaffner and Bagge could do this best, but we often met other pedestrians with whom we entered into conversation. How delightful is the memory of these tramps! Progress on foot is slow, but not only do we see ten times better than from a carriage or the window of a car, but we hear and learn something while talking with the mechanics, citizens, and peasants who are going the same way, or the landlords, bar-maids, and table companions we meet in the taverns, whose guests live according to the custom of the country instead of the international pattern of our great hotels.

As a young married man, I always anticipated as the greatest future happiness taking pedestrian tours with my sons like the Keilhau ones; but Fate ordained otherwise.

On our return to the institute we were received with great rejoicing; and how much the different parties, now united, had to tell one another!

Study recommenced on the first of October, and during the leisure days before that time the village church festival was celebrated under the village linden, with plenty of cakes, and a dance of the peasants, in which we older ones took part. But we were obliged to devote several hours of every day to describing our journey for our relatives at home. Each one filled a large book, which was to be neatly written. The exercise afforded better practice in describing personal experiences than a dozen essays which had been previously read with the teacher.

CHAPTER XVI.

AUTUMN, WINTER, EASTER AND DEPARTURE

Autumn had come, and this season of the year, which afterwards was to be the most fraught with suffering, at that time seemed perhaps the pleasantest; for none afforded a better opportunity for wrestling and playing. It brought delicious fruit, and never was the fire lighted more frequently on the hearth in the plots of ground assigned to the pupils—baking and boiling were pleasant during the cool afternoons.

No month seemed to us so cheery as October. During its course the apples and pears were gathered, and an old privilege allowed the pupils “to glean”—that is, to claim the fruit left on the trees. This tested the keenness of our young eyes, but it sometimes happened that we confounded trees still untouched with those which had been

harvested. “Nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata,”—[The forbidden charms, and the unexpected lures us.]—is an excellent saying of Ovid, whose truth, when he tested it in person, was the cause of his exile. It sometimes brought us into conflict with the owners of the trees, and it was only natural that “Froebel’s youngsters” often excited the peasants’ ire.



Page 25

Gellert, it is true, has sung:

“Enjoy what the Lord has granted,
Grieve not for aught withheld.”

but the popular saying is, “Forbidden fruit tastes sweetest,” and the proverb was right in regard to us Keilhau boys.

Whatever fruit is meant in the story related in Genesis of the fall of man, none could make it clearer to German children than the apple. The Keilhau ones were kept in a cellar, and through the opening we thrust a pole to which the blade of a rapier was fastened. This sometimes brought us up four or five apples at once, which hung on the blade like the flock of ducks that Baron Munchausen’s musket pierced with the ramrod.

We were all honest boys, yet not one, not even the sons of the heads of the institute, ever thought of blaming or checking the zest for this appropriation of other people’s property.

The apple and morality must stand in a very peculiar relation to each other.

Scarcely was the last fruit gathered, when other pleasures greeted us.

The 18th of October, the anniversary of the battle of Leipsic, was celebrated in Thuringia by kindling bonfires on the highest mountains, but ours was always the largest and brightest far and wide. While the flames soared heavenward, we enthusiastically sang patriotic songs. The old Lutzow Jagers, who had fought for the freedom of Germany, led the chorus and gazed with tearful eyes at the boys whom they were rearing for the future supporters and champions of their native land.

Then winter came.

Snow and ice usually appeared in our mountain valley in the latter half of November. We welcomed them, for winter brought coasting parties down the mountains, skating, snow-balling, the clumsy snow-man, and that most active of mortals, the dancing-master, who not only instructed us in the art of Terpsichore, but also gave us rules of decorum which were an abomination to Uncle Froebel.

An opportunity to put them into practice was close at hand, for the 29th of November was Barop’s birthday, which was celebrated by a little dance after the play.

Those who took part in the performance were excused from study for several days before, for with the sapper’s help we built the stage, and even painted the scenes. The piece was rehearsed till it was absolutely faultless.



I took an active part in all these matters during my entire residence at the institute, and we three Ebers brothers had the reputation of being among the best actors, though Martin far surpassed us. We had invented another variety of theatrical performances which we often enjoyed on winter evenings after supper, unless one of the teachers read aloud to us, or we boys performed the classic dramas. While I was one of the younger pupils, we used the large and complete puppet-show which belonged to the institute; but afterwards we preferred to act ourselves, and arranged the performance according to a plan of our own.

Page 26

One of us who had seen a play during the vacation at home told the others the plot. The whole was divided into scenes, and each character was assigned to some representative who was left to personate it according to his own conception, choosing the words and gestures which he deemed most appropriate.

I enjoyed nothing more than these performances; and my mother, who witnessed several of them during one of her visits, afterwards said that it was surprising how well we had managed the affair and acted our parts.

For a long time I was the moving spirit in this play, and we had no lack of talented mimes, personators of sentimental heroes, and droll comedians. The women's parts, of course, were also taken by boys. Ludo made a wonderfully pretty girl. I was sometimes one thing, sometimes another, but almost always stage manager.

These merry improvisations were certainly well fitted to strengthen the creative power and activity of our intellects. There was no lack of admirable stage properties, for the large wardrobe of the institute was at our disposal whenever we wanted to act, which was at least once a week during the whole winter, except in the Advent season, when everything was obliged to yield to the demand of the approaching Christmas festival. Then we were all busy in making presents for our relatives. The younger ones manufactured various cardboard trifles; the older pupils, as embryo cabinet-makers, all sorts of pretty and useful things, especially boxes.

Unluckily, I did not excel as a cabinet-maker, though I managed to finish tolerable boxes; but my mother had two made by the more skilful hands of Ludo, which were provided with locks and hinges, so neatly finished, veneered, and polished that many a trained cabinet-maker's apprentice could have done no better. It was one of Froebel's principles—as I have already mentioned—to follow the "German taste for manual labor," and have us work with spades and pickaxes (in our plots of ground), and with squares, chisels, and saws (in the pasteboard and carving lessons).

A clever elderly man, the sapper, or Sabuim, already mentioned—I think I never heard his real name—instructed us in the trades of the book binder and cabinet-maker. He was said to have served under Napoleon as a sapper, and afterwards settled in our neighbourhood, and found occupation in Keilhau. He was skilful in all kinds of manual labour, and an excellent teacher. The nearer Christmas came the busier were the workshops; and while usually there was no noise, they now resounded with Christmas songs, among which:

"Up, up, my lads! why do ye sleep so long?
The night has passed, and day begins to dawn";

or our Berlin one:



“Something will happen to-morrow, my children,”

were most frequently heard.

Christmas thoughts filled our hearts and minds. Christmas at home had been so delightful that the first year I felt troubled by the idea that the festival must be celebrated away from my mother and without her. But after we had shared the Keilhau holiday, and what preceded and followed it, we could not decide which was the most enjoyable.



Page 27

Once our mother was present, though the cause of her coming was not exactly a joyous one. About a week before the Christmas of my third year at Keilhau I went to the hayloft at dusk, and while scuffling with a companion the hay slipped with us and we both fell to the barn-floor. My school-mate sustained an internal injury, while I escaped with the fracture of two bones, fortunately only of the left arm. The severe suffering which has darkened so large a portion of my life has been attributed to this fracture, but the idea is probably incorrect; otherwise the consequences would have appeared earlier.

At first the arm was very painful; yet the thought of having lost the Christmas pleasures was almost worse. But the experience that the days from which we expect least often afford us most happiness was again verified. Barop had thought it his duty to inform my mother of this serious accident, and two or three days later she arrived. Though I could not play out of doors with the others, there was enough to enjoy in the house with her and some of my comrades.

Every incident of that Christmas has remained in my memory, and, though Fate should grant me many more years of life, I would never forget them. First came the suspense and excitement when the wagon from Rudolstadt filled with boxes drove into the courtyard, and then the watching for those which might be meant for us.

On Christmas eve, when at home the bell summoned us to the Christmas-tree the delight of anticipation reached its climax, and expressed itself in song, in gayer talk, and now and then some harmless scuffle.

Then we went to bed, with the firm resolve of waking early; but the sleep of youth is sounder than any resolution, and suddenly unwonted sounds roused us, perhaps from the dreams of the manger at Bethlehem and the radiant Christmas-tree.

Was it the voice of the angels which appeared to the shepherds? The melody was a Christmas choral played by the Rudolstadt band, which had been summoned to waken us thus pleasantly.

Never did we leave our beds more quickly than in the darkness of that early morning, illuminated as usual only by a tallow dip. Rarely was the process of washing more speedily accomplished—in winter we were often obliged to break a crust of ice which had formed over the water; but this time haste was useless, for no one was admitted into the great hall before the signal was given. At last it sounded, and when we had pressed through the wide-open doors, what splendours greeted our enraptured eyes and ears!

The whole room was most elaborately decorated with garlands of pine. Wherever the light entered the windows we saw transparencies representing biblical Christmas scenes. Christmas-trees—splendid firs of stately height and size, which two days before were the ornaments of the forest—glittered in the light of the candles, which was



reflected from the ruddy cheeks of the apples and the gilded and silvered nuts. Meanwhile the air, "O night so calm, so holy!" floated from the instruments of the musicians.



Page 28

Scarcely had we taken our places when a chorus of many voices singing the angel's greeting, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth," recalled to our happy hearts the sacredness of the morning. Violins and horns blended with the voices; then, before even the most excited could feel the least emotion of impatience, the music ceased. Barop stepped forward, and in the deep, earnest tones peculiar to him exclaimed, "Now see what pleasures the love of your friends has prepared for you!"

The devout, ennobling feelings which had inspired every heart were scattered to the four winds; we dispersed like a flock of doves threatened by a hawk, and the search for the places marked by a label began.

One had already seen his name; a near-sighted fellow went searching from table to table; and here and there one boy called to another to point out what his sharp eyes had detected. On every table stood a Stolle, the Saxon Christmas bread called in Keilhau Schuttchen, and a large plate of nuts and cakes, the gift of the institute. Beside these, either on the tables or the floor, were the boxes from home. They were already opened, but the unpacking was left to us—a wise thing; for what pleasure it afforded us to take out the various gifts, unwrap them, admire, examine, and show them to others!

Those were happy days, for we saw only joyous faces, and our own hearts had room for no other feelings than the heaven-born sisters Love, Joy, and Gratitude.

We entered with fresh zeal upon the season of work which followed. It was the hardest of the twelve months, for it carried us to Easter, the close of the school year, and was interrupted only by the carnival with its merry masquerade.

All sorts of examinations closed the term of instruction. On Palm Sunday the confirmation services took place, which were attended by the parents of many of the pupils, and in which the whole institute shared.

Then came the vacation. It lasted three weeks, and was the only time we were allowed to return home. And what varied pleasures awaited us there! Martha, whom we left a young lady of seventeen, remained unaltered in her charming, gentle grace, but Paula changed every year. One Easter we found the plump school-girl transformed into a slender young lady. The next vacation she had been confirmed, wore long dresses, had lost every trace of boyishness, even rarely showed any touch of her former drollery.

She did not care to go to the theatre, of which Martha was very fond, unless serious dramas were performed. We, on the contrary, liked farces. I still remember a political quip which was frequently repeated at the Konigstadt Theatre, and whose point was a jeer at the aspirations of the revolution: "Property is theft, or a Dream of a Red Republican."

We were in the midst of the reaction and those who had fought at the barricades on the 18th of March applauded when the couplet was sung, of which I remember these lines:



Page 29

“Ah! what bliss is the aspiration
To dangle from a lamp-post
As a martyr for the nation!”

During these vacations politics was naturally a matter of utter indifference to us, and toward their close we usually paid a visit to my grandmother and aunt in Dresden.

So the years passed till Easter (1852) came, and with it our confirmation and my separation from Ludo, who was to follow a different career. We had double instruction in confirmation, first with the village boys from the pastor of Eichfeld, and afterwards from Middendorf at the institute.

Unfortunately, I have entirely forgotten what the Eichfeld clergyman taught us, but Middendorf's lessons made all the deeper impression.

He led us through life to God and the Saviour, and thence back again to life.

How often, after one of these lessons, silence reigned, and teachers and pupils rose from their seats with tearful eyes!

Afterwards I learned from a book which had been kept that what he gave us had been drawn chiefly from the rich experiences of his own life and the Gospels, supplemented by the writings of his favourite teacher, Schleiermacher. By contemplation, the consideration of the universe with the soul rather than with the mind, we should enter into close relations with God and become conscious of our dependence upon him, and this consciousness Middendorf with his teacher Schleiermacher called “religion.”

But the old Lutzow Jager, who in the year 1813 had taken up arms at the Berlin University, had also sat at the feet of Fichte, and therefore crowned his system by declaring, like the latter, that religion was not feeling but perception. Whoever attained this, arrived at a clear understanding of his own ego (Middendorf's mental understanding of life), perfect harmony with himself and the true sanctification of his soul. This man who, according to our Middendorf, is the really religious human being, will be in harmony with God and Nature, and find an answer to the highest of all questions.

Froebel's declaration that he had found “the unity of life,” which had brought Middendorf to Keilhau, probably referred to Fichte. The phrase had doubtless frequently been used by them in conversations about this philosopher, and neither needed an explanation, since Fichte's opinions were familiar to both.

We candidates for confirmation at that time knew the Berlin philosopher only by name, and sentences like “unity with one's self,” “to grasp and fulfil,” “inward purity of life,” *etc.*, which every one who was taught by Middendorf must remember, at first seemed

perplexing; but our teacher, who considered it of the utmost importance to be understood, and whose purpose was not to give us mere words, but to enrich our souls with possessions that would last all our lives, did not cease his explanations until even the least gifted understood their real meaning.



Page 30

This natural, childlike old man never lectured; he was only a pedagogue in the sense of the ancients—that is, a guide of boys. Though precepts tinged by philosophy mingled with his teachings, they only served as points of departure for statements which came to him from the soul and found their way to it.

He possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the religions of all nations, and described each with equal love and an endeavour to show us all their merits. I remember how warmly he praised Confucius's command not to love our fellow-men but to respect them, and how sensible and beautiful it seemed to me, too, in those days. He lingered longest on Buddhism; and it surprises me now to discover how well, with the aids then at his command, he understood the touching charity of Buddha and the deep wisdom and grandeur of his doctrine.

But he showed us the other religions mainly to place Christianity and its renewing and redeeming power in a brighter light. The former served, as it were, for a foil to the picture of our Saviour's religion and character, which he desired to imprint upon the soul. Whether he succeeded in bringing us into complete "unity" with the personality of Christ, to which he stood in such close relations, is doubtful, but he certainly taught us to understand and love him; and this love, though I have also listened to the views of those who attribute the creation and life of the world to mechanical causes, and believe the Deity to be a product of the human intellect, has never grown cold up to the present day.

The code of ethics which Middendorf taught was very simple. His motto, as I have said, was, "True, pure, and upright in life." He might have added, "and with a heart full of love"; for this was what distinguished him from so many, what made him a Christian in the most beautiful sense of the word, and he neglected nothing to render our young hearts an abiding-place for this love.

Of course, our mother came to attend our confirmation, which first took place with the peasant boys—who all wore sprigs of lavender in their button-holes—in the village church at Eichfeld, and then, with Middendorf officiating, in the hall of the institute at Keilhau.

Few boys ever approached the communion-table for the first time in a more devout mood, or with hearts more open to all good things, than did we two brothers that day on our mother's right and left hand.

No matter how much I may have erred, Middendorf's teachings and counsels have not been wholly lost in any stage of my career.

After the confirmation I went away with my mother and Ludo for the vacation, and three weeks later I returned to the institute without my brother.



I missed him everywhere. His greater discretion had kept me from many a folly, and my need of loving some one found satisfaction in him. Besides, his mere presence was a perpetual reminder of my mother.



Page 31

Keilhau was no longer what it had been. New scenes always seem desirable to young people, and for the first time I longed to go away, though I knew nothing of my destination except that it would be a gymnasium.

Yet I loved the institute and its teachers, though I did not realize until later how great was my debt of gratitude. Here, and by them, the foundation of my whole future life was laid, and if I sometimes felt it reel under my feet, the Froebel method was not in fault.

The institute could not dismiss us as finished men; the desired “unity with life” can be attained only upon its stage—the world—in the motley throng of fellow-men, but minds and bodies were carefully trained according to their individual peculiarities, and I might consider myself capable of receiving higher lessons. True, my character was not yet steeled sufficiently to resist every temptation, but I no longer need fear the danger of crossing the barrier which Froebel set for men “worthy” in his sense.

My acquirements were deficient in many respects what the French term “justesse d’esprit” had to a certain degree become mine, as in the case of every Keilhau boy, through our system of education.

Though I could not boast of “being one with Nature,” we had formed a friendly alliance, and I learned by my own experience the truth of Goethe’s words, that it was the only book which offers valuable contents on every page.

I was not yet familiar with life, but I had learned to look about with open eyes.

I had not become a master in any handicraft, but I had learned with paste-pot and knife, saw, plane, and chisel—nay, even axe and handspike--what manual labour meant and how to use my hands.

I had by no means attained to union with God, but I had acquired the ability and desire to recognize his government in Nature as well as in life; for Middendorf had understood how to lead us into a genuine filial relation with him and awaken in our young hearts love for him who kindles in the hearts of men the pure flame of love for their neighbours.

The Greek words which Langenthal wrote in my album, and which mean “Be truthful in love,” were beginning to be as natural to me as abhorrence of cowardice and falsehood had long been.

Love for our native land was imprinted indelibly on my soul, and lives there joyously, ready to sacrifice for the freedom and greatness of Germany even what I hold dearest.



ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A word at the right time and place
Confucius's command not to love our fellow-men but to respect

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Page 37

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