



Pestalozzi's Early Influence in England, Ireland and Scotland

(*A Summary based on Downs and Silber*)

1 Three women writers were amongst those who first introduced Pestalozzi's ideas to Britain.

The Scottish **Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton**'s work included a novel 'The Cottagers of Glenburnie' (1808). The action of the novel takes place in rural Scotland and it looks into education. It is written in a style like that of 'Leonard and Gertrude'.

The Irish novelist **Maria Edgeworth** wrote 'Essays on Professional Education' (1809) with her father. She visited Pestalozzi in 1819/20 and her novels are moralistic and local, like Pestalozzi's.

The French **Mme de Staél** wrote 'De l'Allemagne' (1810) which was banned in France. It was reprinted in England in 1813 and informed the educated British, who could read French, about German philosophical and literary movements. It was important in publicising Pestalozzi's ideas in England because it includes an appreciative section about Pestalozzi's work at Yverdon, based on her own observation of it.

2 Various other French people caused Pestalozzi's ideas to be introduced to the British.

M. A. Jullien, a general in Bonaparte's army, wrote several books about Pestalozzi which were read in many European countries.

Travel to Switzerland was fashionable for wealthy people after the Napoleonic wars. Educationalists and philanthropists went to Europe looking for information and many visited Pestalozzi at Yverdon. This was partly due to the French-speaking **brothers Pictet** in Geneva who directed foreign visitors to the Yverdon Institute as one of the sights of Switzerland worth seeing.

3 Joseph Lancaster and **Andrew Bell** first provided the masses of poor people in Britain with education. The Lancastrian schools taught reading, writing and arithmetic, but the Bell schools taught writing only. Dr. Bell did not want to lift the poor above their station in life. Learning in both school systems was by rote and was superficial. Neither school system developed the potential of the child. In common with Pestalozzi but independent of his ideas, the schools used the more able, quicker learners to teach the others

because of the lack of teachers at the time. This, however, resulted in favouritism and did not work in the positive way it did for Pestalozzi. Joseph Lancaster's schools were under the 'Royal Lancastrian Society', (later the 'British and Foreign School Society') and were based on religious principles common to all Christian denominations.

Andrew Bell's schools were under the 'National Society for the Education of the Poor according to the Principles of the Church of England' and were under the direction of the Church of England. They had more influence and higher numbers.

The Lancastrian schools tried to combine their method with Pestalozzi's, but the National Society schools did not approve and made sure that Pestalozzi's ideas did not catch on in England at this time. Dr. Bell did visit Pestalozzi in 1816 but dismissed what he saw, saying 'I have got to know your Pestalozzi's method. Believe me, in twelve years' time nobody will speak of it, while mine will have spread all over the earth.' (From Silber)

4 Robert Owen (1771-1858) started a new system of community life and infant education in his cotton mill village of New Lanark in Scotland. He did not know about Pestalozzi when he started but what he did was similar to the ideas for community life that Pestalozzi gives in 'Leonard and Gertrude'. Like Pestalozzi, Owen provided a more humane method of education for the poor, using a similar method of teaching. However Owen and Pestalozzi were also quite different. Owen was an atheist (one who believes that God does not exist) and a utopian (an idealist). He thought that the world could immediately be made into a better place and he tried to impose his ideas on the community. Pestalozzi was religious and recognised not only the moral and religious influences on human nature but also humankind's animal nature and he understood the slow process of change. He only hoped to assist nature's own development.

When Owen visited Pestalozzi in 1818 both men thought their own method was the best and would not accept suggestions from the other.

Although not directly acknowledged, Owen and Pestalozzi both brought about widespread reforms in education in Britain. Owen's ideas drove the socialist and cooperative movement, while Pestalozzi's ideas influenced educational theory and practice.

Owen later moved to America (see 'Pestalozzi's influence in America, 3 New Harmony, Indiana').

5 Henry Brougham (1778-1868), who later became Lord Chancellor, visited Yverdon in 1816. In 1818, in 'Evidence before the Education Committee of the House of Commons', he spoke of Pestalozzi's educational approach, calling it 'a principle quite new and deserving of notice.'

6 **William Allen** (1770-1843) was a scientist and a philanthropist who supported many good causes. He worked to abolish the slave trade with William Wilberforce and to improve the conditions of the poor with Henry Brougham. He visited Pestalozzi in 1816, and when Pestalozzi's friends pushed for his method to be introduced in England, the discussions about it took place in Allen's home. He also appealed for funds for Pestalozzi.

7 The Irishman **John H. Synge** (1788-1845), grandfather of the dramatist John M. Synge, went on a Grand Tour of Europe and visited Yverdon in 1814. He was not at all interested in visiting but was persuaded to do so and ended up staying for three months – 'the intelligent countenances of the children and the energetic interest which they appeared to take in their studies forcibly attracted his attention'. (From Silber)

Synge's aim was to familiarise himself with Pestalozzi's principles of teaching, so that he could bring as much of it home as possible. He recognised that Pestalozzi's approach could be used in every subject area and with children of every class. In 1815 Synge opened a school based on Pestalozzi's principles in Roundwood, County Wicklow, Ireland, for the village children and wrote various 'tracts' on Pestalozzi's method.

Synge's Poor School, a House of Industry, taught children language, number and form, and for the rest of the day the children worked on the land.

Synge also spread Pestalozzi's method to England where one schoolmaster, who taught according to Pestalozzi's principles, was so successful that one of the school governors objected saying 'These [poor] children are to be servants to our sons one of these days, and they must not be cleverer than their masters' (from Silber). Some mothers also started to follow the example of Pestalozzi's 'Gertrude'.

8 John, second Viscount de Vesci of Abbyleix, Queen's County, Ireland (1771-1855) was Lord Lieutenant of his county in Ireland and very concerned for the welfare of his people. He started various projects to help the poor, including soup houses. He ran a school for rich children where the teaching followed Pestalozzi's principles. He financially supported Pestalozzi's school for poor children in Switzerland.

9 Charles Edward Herbert Orpen (1791-1856), also from Ireland, was a philanthropist who, in 1816, founded a school in Dublin for the deaf who also could not speak, later the 'National Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb' at Claremont, near Glasnevin. Orpen visited Yverdon and stayed with Pestalozzi throughout the winter of 1818/19. On returning home he did everything he could to promote Pestalozzi's ideas in Britain.

Interest in Pestalozzi was growing in Britain and money was collected in England and Ireland to support Pestalozzi's school for poor children in Switzerland and to have young Englishmen trained in his method. Orpen saw Pestalozzi's method 'introduced in no long time into almost every infant school

in his native country' of Ireland, including at Claremont (Le Fanu in Silber). Orpen started a school at Woodside, Birkenhead, and the teacher there was a former pupil of Pestalozzi's.

10 The Englishman **James Pierrepont Greaves** (1777-1842) was a philanthropist who went to Yverdon after hearing about Pestalozzi from Synge. He went there in 1818 and stayed for about four years. He taught English in Yverdon and Clindy so that Swiss boys would be able to teach in England. In 1819 notices appeared in Swiss and German newspapers offering training to poor boys and girls with a view to their becoming teachers in Great Britain. Some, including J. Heussi and C. F. Reiner, did so.

Pestalozzi wrote his 'Letters on Early Education addressed to J. P. Greaves' (1818-19). Although originally written in German only the English translation now exists.

Greaves was filled with Pestalozzi's loving spirit while staying with him, and returned to England where, to best promote Pestalozzi's ideas, he became secretary to the London Infant School Society and was responsible for training teachers. The Spitalfields' Infant School, with Brougham and Allen on the Committee and Dr Mayo an early subscriber, carried out, thanks to Pestalozzi's influence, what was now recognised to be the important task of educating the infant poor (children aged 18 months to 7 years).

Greaves founded Alcott house in Ham, Surrey, a school which followed Pestalozzi's approach.

11 Dr. Charles Mayo (1792-1846) gave up his job as a headmaster to visit Pestalozzi, having heard about him from Synge. He stayed with Pestalozzi from 1819-1822.

Pestalozzi hoped that through the efforts of his British friends his ideas would spread in Britain. (In 1822, there were over 24 people from Britain at Yverdon, some of them pupils, some adults.)

On returning home, Charles Mayo approached Brougham, Allen and Wilberforce and circulated a letter appealing for funds to support Pestalozzi. A committee consisting of Allen, Mayo and others planned to send English children to be trained at Pestalozzi's Institute but it was found to be simpler to support poor Swiss children to be trained there, if they undertook to later become teachers of the poor in England.

Charles Mayo started a school based on Pestalozzi's principles in Epsom, Surrey, for upper class boys. It grew rapidly and moved to Cheam. Its teachers in the early years had all been educated at Yverdon.

Charles Mayo promoted Pestalozzi by giving lectures on him and by supporting the teachers' training college established at Grays Inn Road, London, by the Home and Colonial School Society. The Society was formed in 1836 to 'show the application of Pestalozzianism to elementary education'.

The training college, with its experimental school, soon became ‘a Model School for the instruction of infants and a Normal School for the training of teachers.’ (From Silber)

12 Elizabeth Mayo (1793 – 1853), sister of Doctor Charles Mayo, directed and supervised the Society’s schools, along with J. S. Reynolds. Elizabeth Mayo had learnt and absorbed Pestalozzi’s method while helping her brother in Epsom and Cheam. She added the chapter on ‘Pestalozzi and his Principles’ to Charles Mayo’s book. Her practical experience was recorded in pamphlets on ‘object teaching’. (For an example of one of Elizabeth Mayo’s Object Lessons refer to ‘Object Lesson on Glass’ in ‘The Teaching of Language’ in ‘The Teaching of Number, Form and Language’ in ‘Examples of Pestalozzi’s Method in Specific Subject Areas’ in ‘Section 4, Pestalozzi and Education’)

As a result of Elizabeth Mayo’s training of hundreds of teachers, the Pestalozzi method which she called ‘object teaching’ spread throughout Britain and overseas. Although there is much of value in object teaching, the influence of the Mayos meant that Pestalozzi’s method was distorted. For example, the importance of a loving environment was lost and the object lesson became too mechanical and formal.

13 Pestalozzi’s influence in Britain is difficult to gauge because his name is not mentioned in many cases. So, although his influence is very clear, it is anonymous. This lack of mention of Pestalozzi’s name is possibly because the implementers were conscious of the strong public opposition to him owing to doubts about his being a true Christian. (For further information, refer to ‘Religion and Morality’ in ‘Morality’ in ‘Section 4, Pestalozzi and Education’) These doubts were caused by Pestalozzi’s unorthodox Christianity, which, for example, meant that he did not accept the doctrine of original sin. (Original sin is the tendency towards evil, with which Christians believe everybody is born.) Instead, Pestalozzi believed that everybody has innate goodwill and is basically good.

Thanks to Pestalozzi’s influence, the basic principle of instruction of the infant schools became ‘love, not fear’. The spirit of the schools became ‘reasonable and religious’ with children of all denominations being accepted. The method of teaching developed which aimed ‘to follow and assist nature’, to use natural objects, to awaken the children’s interest and understanding, and not to teach words by rote without bringing about an understanding of their meaning.

Pestalozzi also influenced adult education, for example in the teachers’ training colleges and in the Mechanics’ Institutions. His influence is also seen at London University, founded in 1827, in order to educate more students and to offer a more realistic subject choice with more modern teaching methods than offered by Oxford and Cambridge. The Glasgow Free Press, 24th June 1826, wrote about London University, ‘We understand, instead of getting at a language by rules, acquired by rote, and lost in much less time than acquired, the pupil will have the advantage of some of the recent systems of Pestalozzi...’ (From Silber)

Via its influence on Infant schools and Teacher Training, Pestalozzi's approach also influenced education generally, so that, '...while the name of Pestalozzi has nearly been forgotten, many if not most of his principles have insensibly been assimilated in the modern system of education.' (From the Genealogical Account of the Mayo Family, 1882, quoted in Silber)

Sources

Downs, R. B. (1975) Heinrich Pestalozzi, Father of Modern Pedagogy Boston: Twayne Publishers

Silber, K. (1960) Pestalozzi The Man and His Work London: Routledge and Kegan Paul