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Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649185825

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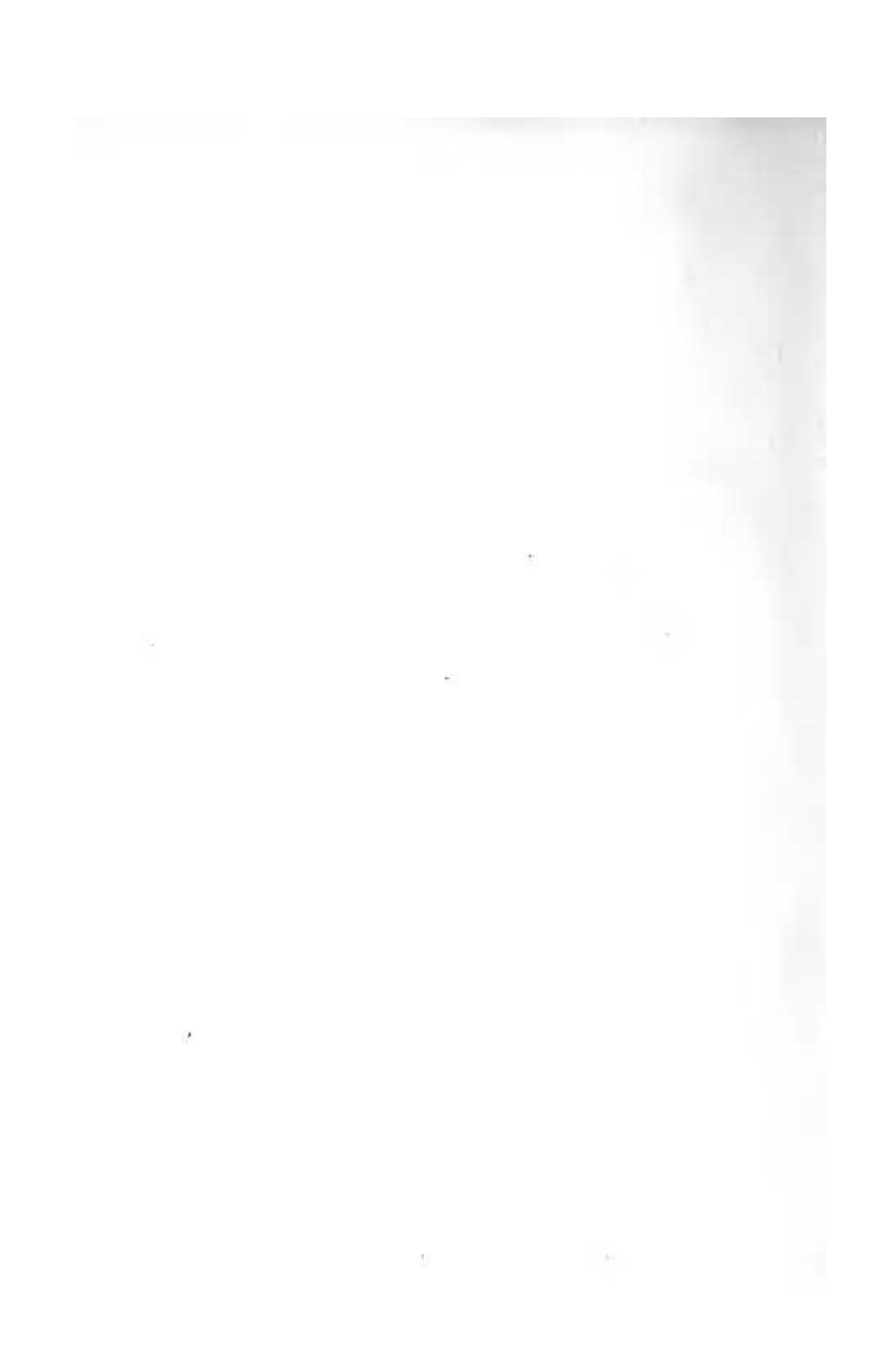
P. P. CLAXTON

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Volume 1



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Sketches of Froebel's Life and Times

WITH INTRODUCTION
BY THE

HON. P. P. CLAXTON
United States Commissioner of Education



1914
MILTON BRADLEY COMPANY
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

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INTRODUCTION

SEEK ye first the Kingdom of God." —On his first Monday morning in school, the boy Friedrich Froebel heard the children, all standing, repeat these words. They were the words of the text of the sermon to which the children had listened on Sunday. Every morning of the week they were repeated over and over again, by individual children and by the whole group, until they made an impression upon him, "as none had ever done before and none had ever done after." Writing of this event forty years later, he says, "Perhaps even then, the simple boy heard and felt that these words would be the foundation and the salvation of his life, bringing to him that conviction which was to become later on to the working, striving man, a source of incomparable courage, of unflinching, ever-ready, and cheerful self-sacrifice. In short, my introduction into that school was my birth into the higher, spiritual life." He who would understand Froebel's life and philosophy of education must bear this statement in mind,

and remember that for Froebel, the Kingdom of God meant the realization of the divine spirit in the individual man and woman, and of the divine order in human society.

No other educator has realized so fully the unity of nature, man, and God. No other has seen more clearly the vision of redeemed humanity, living in harmony with nature, governed by love, and rejoicing in ever-progressing creative work. No other has ever understood better that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of love, of light, of life, of truth, and of intelligent, skillful, effective service. For him, all roads lead to God. For him, God is the all-pervading, creative spirit of the Universe. The soul of man is a part of the divine essence. The education of man consists in the unfolding and revelation of this divine essence, through well-guided, spontaneous, creative activity. God is a creator, and man, made in his image, is a creator also. Education does not consist alone or chiefly in instruction or training, but rather—development and growth. The teacher is therefore a gardener, watching patiently and intelligently for the budding points of the soul, the nascent stages of interest, supplying suitable environment—food, light, and air—and protecting the child against those who, in their ignorance and ruthless zeal, would hamper and restrain, dwarf and warp, or unduly stimulate