

## PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

**Observation of Kindergarten Methods as a Help to the Primary Teacher.**

The great interest manifested at the late Educational Association, held in Truro, in kindergarten principles and methods is of good augury. This interest arises partly from the increasing study of the history and philosophy of education; but still more from the growing conviction on the part of teachers that the old-time scholastic drill of the primary school must give place, with little children, to more natural and efficient methods if they are to be well prepared for the succeeding grades. But, above all, and stronger still, is the conviction, born of experience, of those teachers who have been privileged to receive into their schools children who have had the benefit of good kindergarten training; for they soon find in such children curiosity (the desire of knowledge) all alive, an accurate sense of number, so far as it goes, the ability to sing in pure, pleasant tones and to use language with more or less facility. There is also a disposition to obey orders, and having felt the comfort of law and order, to fall in cheerfully with the regulations of the school. A marked feature is kindness of manner to school-fellows, and if the teacher will reciprocate, she will receive the same affectionate respect which the child has hitherto felt for the kindergarten.

And we may add that intelligent people, parents and teachers, who travel, and who see the effect of kindergarten principles practically applied in the school systems of other countries, will very soon demand that our school system shall also share the benefits accruing from Froebel's system. As it is a mark of wisdom to be prepared to satisfy imperative demands with a good grace, and even to forestall them, it will be well for our teachers to face this matter fairly. About five years ago, training and instruction in kindergarten was introduced into the Boston Normal School as a part of the course. On a recent visit the writer found that during the second term, *all* the pupils study theory of kindergarten three hours weekly for four weeks, which equals twelve lessons. The third term, or first half of the second year, *all* study kindergarten methods for eight weeks, two hours weekly, equal to sixteen lessons. Thus it will be observed that, exclusive of the general and illustrative references, which would be made incidentally in psychology and pedagogics which begin in the first term and continue all through the two years, each pupil-teacher receives twenty-eight lessons of one hour each during the second and third terms. Any one who has interviewed Dr. Dunton, the principal, and marked his solid New England face and manner, will understand that these are real, thorough lessons, not mere perfunctory performances.

Those, however, who are training for kindergarten alone, devote the second year wholly to theory and practice of kindergarten, and some take a post-graduate course. Last year saw thirty of these graduates in charge of the city kindergartens of Boston. Out of sixty-one graduates of the class of 1895, eight took the kindergarten course. These latter had also practised

and observed eight weeks in grammar and primary schools, principally in the latter. Thus it will be seen, by judicious arrangement, both teachers and kindergartners are made sufficiently acquainted with each other's special work to secure intelligent co-operation.

Is not this an end for which we should work?

Not only must we have observation in our normal schools, but practice also, and we must take the whole question seriously. How shall this be done? In two ways. First by private study of the literature and material of the kindergarten which is full, scientific and brilliant. This we leave for future reference, if permitted. But great as is the value of private study, observation in a good kindergarten is absolutely necessary; nothing will compensate for the lack of that, if we wish to be successful in applying kindergarten methods to primary school work. The earnest teacher, who will spend a few days in a good kindergarten, and who will surrender herself to its benign influence, becoming, as it were, a little child again with open heart and attentive eyes, will gain an insight into child-nature that will enable her to read many open secrets that will add to her power as an educator. And if our teachers will spend even a few weeks observing the kindergarten, which many of them might do, if they would explain the necessity of more pleasing methods with the little pupils, to the parents, *especially* the *mothers*; for in many cases, particularly in graded schools, the trustees might be won, if the teacher would plead for the privilege and show the advantages to be gained, to grant a few weeks for the purpose of studying kindergarten methods in order to improve their school. The fact that two school sections in Nova Scotia, are already availing themselves of the privilege of observation offered by the Truro normal school kindergarten and the Dartmouth free public school kindergarten will furnish a precedent, and either of these will be an admirable field for study and observation. The trustees of Lockeport, Shelburne Co., deserve great praise, for they give the lady her time and pay her travelling expenses to and from Dartmouth. But they will reap advantages that will repay them many times over. The law allows eight teaching days, without loss of grant. The time approaches, when in Nova Scotia, every teacher will be required, as in Boston, to spend part of their normal school course in serious study of Froebel's system. There is an opportunity now for well-educated young women to fit themselves to take charge of kindergartens by going either to Truro with Mrs. Patterson, or to Dartmouth with Miss Hamilton, and taking a full course. Both these ladies are thoroughly competent and their kindergartens offer a fine field for observation and practice. The training is given free in consideration of faithful discharge of the duty of an assistant and it is for one year. It may be added that for those who are diligent in practice and study and especially for those who hold a provincial license, there will no doubt be situations open at the close of the course.

But many primary teachers who cannot afford to drop out a whole year if they really see the need for improvement in their methods, can, as suggested above, make a short visit for observation to whichever one