

## THE KINDERGARTEN.

[The following statement of the chief objects of the kindergarten is taken from the report of Mr. James L. Hughes and Mr. E. P. Roden to the Toronto public school board on their return from an inspection of the St. Louis public kindergartens, —Ed.]

## THE OBJECTS OF THE KINDERGARTEN.

The objects of the kindergarten may best be briefly stated in the words of its illustrious founder Froebel:—"To take the oversight of children before they are ready for school life; to exert an influence over their whole being in correspondence with its nature; to strengthen their bodily powers; to exercise their senses; to employ the awakening mind; to make them thoroughly acquainted with the world of nature and of man; to guide their heart and soul in a right direction, and to lead them to the origin of all life, and to union with Him."

We have become so accustomed to regard the function of the school as limited to the cultivation of the intellect alone, that it is difficult to form a just estimate of the real value of a system which trains and develops the entire being, morally, mentally, physically, and socially. It will be quite impossible to give an explanation in detail of the methods employed in the kindergarten to accomplish the work outlined by Froebel. It took him thirty years of constant study to complete the system, and it requires at least a two-years' course to become a proficient kindergartener. It may be of service to state, also, that the kindergarten is not a school in the ordinary acceptance of that word. It is not a place to teach reading, writing, &c., but consists chiefly of practice with 'gifts,' balls of different colours, cubes, spheres, cylinders, squares, triangles, &c.; 'occupations,' weaving paper mats, cutting and pasting paper patterns, paper folding, interlacing, stick work, slat work, peas work, moulding with clay, perforating paper, worsted work, drawing, &c.; games, plays, and exercise songs. By means of these elements Froebel arranged a system which reaches effectively every part of the nature of the child, and promotes its vigorous and healthful growth.

## MORAL TRAINING.

If Froebel had designed to accomplish nothing more by the kindergarten than the development of the moral and religious instincts of childhood, his work would ultimately have become an essential part of all national systems of education. There is no other part of his system that to the thoughtful mind so clearly reveals the comprehensiveness and philosophic basis of his methods, and their wonderful adaptation to the nature of the child, and the laws of its growth. Every one of his remarkable songs, every one of his stories, every one of his games, and every one of his occupations, gives incidentally a practical direction to the moral natures of the children. There is in the kindergarten no sermonizing to children who are not listening, no theorizing about abstractions which they cannot understand, no weak sentimentality, but a genuine acting out of the best tendencies of human nature. The child is made to occupy, in a way that is real to him, every relationship to nature, the family, society, his country, and his Creator. He practices in his games and plays those virtues which form the only sure foundation for the family and the State. He acts submissively to his parents, lovingly towards his brothers and sisters, honourably with his neighbours, kindly to the poor, and tenderly to the aged. He learns to be grateful for benefits, to respect honest work, to know that work is an advantage to the individual and the community, to acknowledge that labour should be justly rewarded, to destroy nothing, to waste nothing, to submit to constituted municipal and national authorities, to give hearty approval to good actions, and to look with just indignation on mean and ungenerous conduct, to re-

strain his evil tendencies, to be unselfish, to control his tastes even when they are pure and good, as he cannot get everything he desires, and to recognize God, through His works, as the Creator, and as the central power of the universe, the source of knowledge, of love, and of blessing. It is quite impossible to realize, without a close and extended examination of a genuine kindergarten, how a child can be placed in such a variety of circumstances as to make it necessary for him to develop incidentally, without a consciousness of the process, all the better portions of his nature, and to practise the correct moral code for the home, society, and the State. That Froebel was able, after even thirty years' incessant study, to found a system which accomplishes this, conclusively entitles him to an honoured place among educational reformers.

## PHYSICAL CULTURE.

The physical benefits conferred by the kindergarten are second in importance only to those resulting from its moral and religious training. The good effects of this department of kindergarten work are so quickly apparent and so easily recognized that there is in some places a popular delusion that the kindergarten consists only of a series of games and plays. This is a grave error; but although the games, plays, and songs do not constitute the entire work of a kindergarten, they form a most important part of it, inasmuch as, while accomplishing many other excellent results, they also produce most desirable effects on the physical systems of the children. The chief of these effects are:—

1. By a large amount of marching in time with music they learn to walk properly, a most important accomplishment.
2. As the plays are so judiciously arranged as to call into natural action every part of the muscular system, the result could only be what it uniformly is, harmonious development, and consequently perfect freedom and gracefulness of action. There is no probability that a child in the kindergarten will grow up with good arms and legs and weak loins and contracted chest.
3. The dramatic gesture practised as a visible interpretation of the thought and sentiment of the songs while they are being sung, leads to a surprising degree of expressiveness and appropriateness in the movements of the hands, the head, the eyes, and indeed, the entire body, while speaking. This is of more importance than at first sight it may appear to be. The skilled elocutionist may thrill his hearers by his tones alone. Vast audiences are frequently moved to tears by the touching gestures of a deaf-mute in reciting the Lord's Prayer. Most people are more deeply affected in a kindergarten by the gestures than by the singing. Dramatic interpretation is to many more touching than vocal interpretation. Either voice or action alone possesses wondrous power of expression, but it is only when they are appropriately united that thought is presented in all its clearness, and feeling communicated with resistless power. It is no light matter, then, for girls and boys to have their bodies trained to act in harmony with their vocal organs in expressing their thoughts and sentiments.
4. The general health of the children is improved, and the vigorous growth of their systems promoted. One of the chief defects of the public school system is that both positively and negatively it interferes with the proper natural growth of the child's body. If adequate attention were paid to the development of the body in school, there would be no complaints about over-study. Body and brain should grow together, do grow together until the child gets to school. The kindergarten is unquestionably the best means of remedying this grave defect in the school. The distinctive feature of kindergarten exercise, as well as of every other part of the system, is that the benefit comes incidentally. The children are not conscious that they are performing calisthenic exercises for the benefit of their health; they are playing for pleasure. Exercise