

For some time past the idea of establishing public kindergartens, in Dunedjn has been entertained by a number of gentlemen in the community. The idea was first mooted about 12 months ago, when Sir William Fox gave a lecture in Dunedin on the subject of kindergartens. It was not, however, until Bishop Sutor was in Dunedin, in March last, that any definite steps were taken to bring about what many had desired. At that time a meeting was held in the Town Hall, and addressed, by Bishop Suter and other gentlemen. It was subsequently resolved to form a kindergarten association, and a large committee of ladies and gentlemen was appointed to give effect to the resolution. It was decided to start a kindergarten in Walker street, the St. Andrew's Church congregation having agreed to grant the Mission Hall in, the neighbourhood of the church free of charge to the committee for the purpose. Subscriptions were set on foot, and enough money was raised to pay the expenses connected with the proposed kindergarten for 12 months. An experienced teacher was then obtained, in the person of Miss Wieneke, and the services of Miss Creswell as assistant teacher were also secured. Miss Wieneke, who, by the way, has taught kindergartens formerly in Germany and lately in Christchurch, commenced her duties in the Mission Hall, in Walker street a little over a fortnight ago. Since then she has had from 12 to 20 of the poorer children of the neighbourhood to instruct. The ages of these children vary from four to six years, but it is proposed shortly to admit children three years of age and also to increase the number to 30. It is, however, not intended that children over six years should attend the kindergarten, as the committee do not wish to interfere with those who are entitled by reason of their age to attend the State schools. Although only a short time has elapsed since the kindergarten was opened, the children appear to have learnt a number of things in a small way. A representative of this paper visited the Mission Hall on Friday in company with the Rev. Mr Waddell, and had an opportunity of seeing the little folks go through their performances. After a short lesson in writing - in which the children copied some pothooks off the blackboard on to their slates - there were some singing and simple gymnastic exercises. The children were then given a lesson in the discrimination of colours combined with one in elementary geometry. The teacher sat at one end of a table, surrounded by the pupils, and held up some red, blue, and yellow squares of paper. The children were taught to name the colours as they were exposed to their gaze, and subsequently each child had one of the squares of paper placed before it. Then all were instructed as to the properties of a square by being made to count the corners and sides, and then to repeat the formula "My square has four corners and four sides" They were afterwards, taught the properties of a triangle, in a similar way. Marching, singing, and various other exercises were also gone through and the children evidently regarded their occupations in the light of recreation, and appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves. It was somewhat surprising to observe, considering their age and the short time they have been under discipline, how attentive the majority were to their lessons. One or two, as might be expected, evinced a laughable, parrot-like proclivity to repeat things without thinking. For instance, one little fellow, who showed a decided tendency to stare about him, and apparently regarded the visitors, to the hall with more interest than the principles of geometry, persisted in saying that his triangle had four sides after having previously learnt the number of sides to a square. The lessons, it may be stated, are varied from day to day. The children are taught among other things how to construct houses and various geometrical designs out of blocks of wood. Their different senses are trained and they become intimately acquainted with the properties of bodies. In the course of time they have "object" lessons, and they are also taught, to weave, to knit, and to sew. All their young faculties are in fact trained; and a great feature of the system adopted in the kindergarten is that learning is made pleasant, the children gain their knowledge first-hand - that is from the things themselves, instead of second-hand through books. The establishment of the kindergarten in Walker street will no doubt, prove a great boon to the neighbourhood, and as it is quite unsectarian and provides exercise, recreation and education for poor children free of cost who would otherwise spend their time, playing in the streets and gutters, it is an institution worthy of the support of all interested in the cause of education.

