

KINDERGARTEN WORK IN ADELAIDE.

THE WEST-END SCHOOL.
(By our Special Reporter.)

In a humble yet inviting cottage at the west-end of the city a work has just been begun the full value of which is realised by few people. The average individual is probably quite ignorant of the scope for useful labor—and it is entirely a labor of love—which is presented by a kindergarten. Some would doubtless be inclined to consider a kindergarten—or a children's garden, which is the literal meaning of this German word—with a certain degree of cynicism, while others simply view such a school as "nice and very interesting." But as a matter of fact, it has a far-reaching influence upon child life, tends towards character building, and provides a class of education which is given by no other school.

One hot morning this week I visited the free kindergarten opened by the Kindergarten Union of South Australia last Monday in Franklin-street west. The kindergarten (Miss De Lissa), who is from the Sydney Kindergarten Training College, was busily engaged with her 40 little charges, ranging between the ages of 3 to 6 years. Despite the enervating heat the children seemed perfectly contented, and were enjoying their simple yet beautiful lessons, which are a happy combination of work and play, and last from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. One large room and two smaller ones, and a playground, are at the disposal of the little pupils, but the school is not yet quite in apple-pie order, in the opinion of Miss De Lissa, who is a lover of tastefulness and neatness. At the present rate of progress with the primitive means at her disposal the school should soon, as more furniture and other decorative articles are forthcoming, be a model of simplicity, combined with attractiveness. Miss De Lissa received me most cordially, and having dismissed the school for the day, readily consented to give an idea of the work contemplated. The tiny seats in the school-room, less than a foot high, and the desks lower than ordinary chairs, were reminiscent of nursery days.

"We begin with getting the children's interest," explained Miss De Lissa. "At this stage their interest is in play, so that is the starting point of all work. Their play includes branches of study, such as mathematics, geography, and nature study. We try to make it actual living, and not a preparation for future life, as in most schools. That is a very great difference. The children are not required to store up knowledge for some future dreamt-of time. A great spirit of co-operation and unity is fostered. We want each child to feel he or she is a unit, and that it is only by the perfection of the units that there can be a complete unity."

Are the parents of the children pleased that the work has been started? I asked.

"Oh, yes. I've already visited about 60 homes during this week. I seem to be able to deal with the children better when I know their parents. Some of the mothers metaphorically embraced me, while others were less demonstrative. Some are particularly keen. One of the fathers has

were less demonstrative. Some are particularly keen. One of the fathers has sworn to help us all he can. We do not ask the children for money, but we like them to bring it if they can. In the first two days 1/1½ was received. Several curious mothers asked me with bated breath what religion was taught in the school. I told her the only religion was that of love, which is said to be what makes the world go round. There will be a parents' club later on. We want to work together. It will be largely of a social nature, but talks on sanitation, the care of children, and hygiene should prove interesting and useful."

There is a wide field for your comprehensive work?

"Yes; it really puzzled me to see where the children came from. There seem to be no slums here as I expected to find them. I was surprised when I arrived from Sydney to see such beautifully clean streets, with scarcely a particle of dust or a piece of paper flying about, but on the morning the school was opened I found lots of eager children waiting for me. And they were dirty. I had to send some home because of their bad eyes. One little girl was waiting outside as early as 6 o'clock in the morning."

When I commented on the artistic and tastefully selected pictures hung on the walls, Miss De Lissa said—"It is very desirable to have the best pictures, and we have the best music, too. We are still needing some clear glass vases. At present pickle bottles have been called into requisition. We like to make the rooms as pretty as possible with flowers. After this week we will be glad to welcome visitors as often as possible. We make a point of the lunch. It is not an eating time so much as a gathering for baby talk. Dainty paper serviettes are used, and each of the four classes has its own 'housekeeper,' whose duty it is to prepare the lunch. Each child is given small duties to discharge. They like this school life and look upon it as their other home."

And you are fond of the kindergarten?

"I've devoted my time to it for the last three years, and I wouldn't change the life for anything in the world."

Captain Clare, C.M.G., intends spending a few days at Victor Harbor before leaving at the end of this month to take charge of the gunboat Protector, which is at present being used by the naval force in Victoria. He will take the Protector from Melbourne to Sydney, where for two or three months the gunboat will be used by the New South Wales section of the Commonwealth Naval Force.