

ON TEACHING NATURE STUDY.

(Contributed.)

It is easier to imagine what Nature Study is than to express it in words. We can feel it, think it, love it, and yet if asked what it is be unable to answer. C. F. Hodge says, "Nature Study is learning those things in nature which are best worth knowing, to the end of doing those things which make life most worth the living." Who is not inspired to live a bigger life, to do nobler things after a walk over field and meadow, a stroll through a wood, or a climb to a mountain top?"

All great poets of all ages have been inspired by nature to express their love for it in their writings. Someone has said, "Nature Study is never a task but a tonic. It recreates."

The question is asked by many, "Why introduce Nature Study into our school?" We might better ask, "Why stop Nature Study when the child enters school?" His earliest education is almost entirely Nature Study by nature's method. Can we do better than to continue this education?

The child in the country school has with regard to Nature Study greater advantages than the child of the city. This difficulty can be met, however, by the use of city parks and by referring to the visits which at one time or another the city child has probably made in the country.

If the country child is taught to observe nature in all its infinite beauty on his walks to and from school, he will not only develop a love for the wonderful world of out of doors, but he will be kept from mischief, which ever awaits his active capabilities. He should be encouraged to ask questions and to seek the answer in books on Nature Study. He will in this way acquire the habit of close and accurate observation and research, which should be of lasting benefit to him.

Sometimes it is a good idea to give children questions to find out the answer by personal observation and to have them tell how they discovered it. Among other questions these: "What is the use of the down on the stem of certain kinds of thistles?" or, "Is the perfume of a flower of any use to the flower itself?"

What child will not work better all day if told on Friday morning he is going to be dismissed an hour early to go for a tramp through the old pasture near the woods? It is always advisable to tell children before they start just what they

must look for and the finite results one expects, because it is difficult to get their undivided attention out in the open where there is so much to distract them.

During inclement weather nature subjects may be introduced into the class room for study. Each pupil may have the care of a growing plant. With very little trouble and expense, insects may also be made to thrive indoors.

During the winter month the study of evergreens, of animals, of the earth and sky may be profitably pursued.

One of the chief advantages in the teaching of Nature Study is its correlation with geography, drawing and other subjects.

Advantage may be taken of a manufacturing or a mining town by introducing the study of the different ores into the curriculum. In a farming district the study of corn, of wheat, of fruit trees, of plant food, of soil, of weeds — good and bad, and of the dispersal of seeds will be found to be of inestimable practical importance.

Nature Study takes the child, as well as his teacher, out of doors. It teaches him to love and to protect the bird that he might otherwise wantonly stone; to wonder at the loveliness of the wayside flower, to ask questions that are concerned with the deep things of science and of its Creator.

The study of nature misses its highest purpose unless it leads the child from nature up to its Author — God.

Nature Study then, points the child from the seen to the unseen. Through function, purpose and plan he sees a Planner and to him nature has revealed its greatest thought, its grandest lesson— eternal law, eternal unity.

THE JOY OF LAW.

Now I have found obedience that is joy;
Not pain, not conflict of the heart and mind,
But harmony of human souls with God.
Some law there needs be other than the law,
Of our own wills. Happy is he who finds,
A law wherein his spirit is left free.

— H. E. Hamilton-King.

When I commence teaching again I will surely let you know and receive the REVIEW once again. No teacher should be without it, and as you already know every teacher appreciates it very much.— J. M., N. S.