

NATURE STUDY—No. IX.

THE PRACTICAL ASPECT OF NATURE STUDY.

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It would be easy for the enthusiastic lover of nature to describe in glowing terms the wonderful beauty of a tiny flower or the marvellous markings of a crawling caterpillar, but by most persons the first would be considered an insignificant plant and the latter an ugly worm; and, although the enthusiast might study nature with such persons for days, it is doubtful if they would ever become true nature students, unless each, of his own accord and by himself, went forth and communed with nature, and, becoming inspired by personal contact with her, seized every opportunity to glean a few grains from her inexhaustible stores. It is when the student has reached this stage that the teacher will be eagerly sought out, for, once the desire for knowledge is born, the thirst for it is intense.

It has been strongly impressed upon the writer that the permanent success of the Nature Study movement will largely depend upon the demonstration of its practical value. This is a practical age, and things useful take a very prominent place in it. I believe, therefore, that our nature studies should begin with something that it is generally conceded we should know more about, such as the economic plants which produce our daily food, as wheat, barley, oats, Indian corn, roots of various kinds and fruits; the trees which are of greatest value for timber, furniture and other purposes; the animals, birds and insects which are beneficial and injurious; the soil, the air, the clouds, and, in fact, everything by which we live and move and have our being. These can be studied in such a way as to show their natural beauty, their structure, their life history, and their relation one to another, and, at the same time, studied with a view to obtaining some practical result and the developing of the power of observation. Excursions to the woods need not become rarer, but there should be excursions to the farm, the orchard and garden as well. If a real interest in, and a definite knowledge of, the growth and development of a pumpkin, for instance, or of a plant of wheat, is the result of nature studies with the student, it will then be