

Nature Study.

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Our course of instruction is so full that it seems as though very little time can be spared for nature study. This subject, left as it is largely to the teacher to select what and how much shall be taught, is the easiest crowded out. But surely it is one of the most important, if not the most important, subject of the whole course. The child who has been led to know something of his own surroundings, and to be interested in and in sympathy with them, has an added interest in life. His powers of observation are developed, and he sees what otherwise he would pass by without noticing. Generally speaking, it is the things we are interested in we see. The teacher who has led the child to love the study of nature has done much more for him than if she had taught him to work out the most intricate problems or led him to memorize history until he knows the event connected with every date between the covers of the text-book. These things he soon forgets, to a great extent, and most of them he never misses, although he has, of course, the benefit derived from the exercise of his reasoning powers and memory in the mastering of them. But could not his mind be developed equally well in acquiring something that will stay with him and be to him a lasting source of interest and pleasure? The study of nature is a live study. The text-book, the world around him, is ever open before him with its changing aspects as the seasons change—always new, always interesting—with its past history written on its face for the student of nature to read. It is a subject large enough to last a lifetime, and the results of the years of study will be meagre, but interesting enough to be a source of pleasure through all that time. And it has a telling effect on the boy's moral character. No boy can be cruel if he has learned to love the study of birds and insects. It makes him better, happier, more useful—and this is surely the aim of all true education.

Quite often, too, the teacher, having got very little nature study as a pupil, feels that she knows too little to undertake to teach it. What is she going to teach and where will she begin? As regards herself, the first study of all true teachers is the highest of all nature studies, the study of the child. As regards where she shall begin to teach, Prof. Lochhead's advice is "Begin—anything that has an interest for the children, anything that has an inter-

est for you—something suggested by a reading lesson. Once begun you will be surprised at the number of subjects that will come up for investigation—only be sure to begin. There are many commonplace things to study when we really see with our eyes and hear with our ears and realize that every detail of the structure of a plant or an animal, or of the country around, has a history and a meaning, most of it within the comprehension of the child."

Of course, as teachers, we must have some definite knowledge of the subject ourselves before we attempt to teach it. It is right to study and investigate with the pupils, but we need help outside of this. There are many excellent books on nature study, some of which every teacher should have, and that such be in the library of every school fortunate enough to have a library. Every teacher should read "The Nature Study Idea," by Bailey, and "Flash-lights of Nature," by Grant Allan; then there is "Nature's Garden," by Blanchard; "Nature Study Course," by Deerness, and a great many others on nature study in general, besides a great variety of comprehensive ones on the different departments of the subject. These latter are many of them too expensive for a teacher to afford in a private library; and here is where the school library should come in.

Granted that very little time can be given to nature study, there are spare moments that can be utilized—just a few minutes here and there on something that happens to come up—excursions to be made after school, questions put to the children and suggestions made that will lead them to keep their eyes open and senses alert outside of the schoolroom, and come in next morning full of the things they saw. It may be a new bird—it often is—of very wonderful colour and marking, showing how sadly in need of training the pupil is along the line of making correct observations in detail; later, the wonderful specimen sobers down into something quite ordinary. Thus, with only a few minutes now and then, with very little space on the time-table, nature study may be made a very important feature of the year's work.

We can begin work right where we are—in our home surroundings, in the school-yard. Study the plants that grow there—not for the purpose of analysis particularly, but with regard to their environment. Why they grow in that particular locality; what in their structure makes them adapted to their surroundings; the effect of light and