MONDAY AFTERNOON LECTURE.—No. 1.

THE STUDY OF NATURAL HISTORY.

By Miss Margaret A. Mills.

(Read Jan. 12, 1891.)

The term Natural History, should be used to include the study of all natural objects whether they are possessed of life, or, give no evidence of vitality. The phenomena of the inorganic world are the special concern of the geologist and mineralogist. The phenomena of the nature and relations of all bodies which exhibit life, are known as the science of biology, which is subdivided into two main classes—botany which deals with plants, and zoology which treats of animals. This general application of the term is often narrowed so that Natural History includes zoology alone. The science of Botany includes everything relating to the vegetable kingdom whether in a living or fossil state. It takes a comprehensive view of all plants, from the minutest microscopic growth to the vast productions of the tropics. From earliest times this study has been much more rationally treated than zoology. It has always been understood as embracing not only the study of the external form of plants, their systematic classification and their geographical distribution, but also that of their minute structure and the processes of nutrition and reproduction. The botanist has studied from his garden of living specimens, and from his hot-house, in which could be reared under the proper conditions necessary for their development, plants from the seeds obtained from foreign lands.

On the contrary, the zoologist had no such aid, and for centuries had to limit his researches and observations to the skeletons and dried skins of birds and animals, or the collections of the traveller or sportsman. It was only in the past century that a knowledge of the preservation of the entire specimen in alcohol was learned. Thence its development and progress has been delayed, not from any lack of interest in the subject, but from a dearth of the facilities and aids which had so assisted the sister science—botany.

A history of zoology and botany must take account of the growth of the various kinds of information acquired in past ages through the