

NATURE STUDY—No. XX.

NATURE STUDY AT THE MACDONALD INSTITUTE.

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Perhaps no more important educational problem has been attempted in recent years than that which was presented in the Nature Study department of the Macdonald Institute at Guelph to the late Dr. W. H. Muldrew, whose unexpected death on Oct. 7th, 1904, at the very beginning of the first term in which a regular Nature Study class had been enrolled, has proved a serious loss not only to the Macdonald Institute, but to educational progress generally in Canada. Prof. Lochhead, who next assumed charge of the Nature Study department, setting to work with a definite aim, has ably carried forward the work of his predecessor.

Regarding the psychological value of the new study in the development of child intellect, there is, I think, a general measure of unanimity among educational workers. It is when we turn from this phase of the question to the necessity of the teacher's knowledge of Nature and the simpler elements of Science extending far beyond that of the child, in order that the efforts of the latter may be best stimulated and directed, that the first note of discord arises; and we find our educators quietly taking sides. On the one hand are arrayed those who assert that a knowledge of child-nature is by all odds the primary requisite for the equipment of the teacher of Nature Study. On the other—and here are embattled the staff of the Macdonald Institute—stand those who believe that a knowledge of child-nature, while an element of very great importance in itself, must still yield precedence to a knowledge of that other nature which is to be met with in the out-of-doors, and upon the regular working of whose laws the welfare of the human race inevitably depends.

Imbued with this conviction, the staff early directed their efforts towards placing the students as much as possible in direct contact with Nature, and particularly with those objects and phenomena which lay readiest to hand. This was secured in two ways, (1) by field excursions, (2) by laboratory work and lectures. The field work proved in many ways perhaps the most in-