

BOTANICAL BRANCH.

On January 26th the following members and friends of the Botanical Branch met at the residence of Mr. A. E. Attwood : Messrs. J. Fletcher, J. Macoun, R. B. Whyte, W. T. Macoun, T. E. Clarke, J. M. Macoun, D. A. Campbell, R. Cameron, W. C. Ewing, J. C. Spence and Norman Criddle.

The greater part of the evening was spent in considering the obstacles to the successful teaching of Nature Study in city public schools. The following difficulties were pointed out by the leader:

1. Lack of time. The curriculum is already crowded, and public opinion is declaring itself in favor of greater thoroughness in the old staple subjects.
2. Lack of material and appliances for study. As is the case with the other two new subjects, Domestic Science and Manual Training, the work must be done by the pupils individually in a place with the necessary equipments. A Nature Study laboratory is as necessary to the successful teaching of elementary science as is a workshop in the teaching of manual training.
3. Lack of definiteness. An educationist has said that the teacher tolerates the product on account of the process, and that the pupil tolerates the process on account of the product. As things are at present, there is no tangible product for work done by the pupils. Even teachers lack a clear conception of the scope of the subject. Nature Study requires to be defined in a way that will appeal to all.
4. A cause of disorder. The frivolity often observable in a large class of small children during a lesson in Nature Study tends to demoralize the class. The orderly freedom necessary to good work in mutual investigation is a difficult condition in classes of forty or fifty young pupils.
5. Lack of popularity. By actual vote of over 200 pupils, it was ascertained that Nature Study is not liked as well as are the ordinary subjects. Unpopularity of any school subject is due either to its essential unsuitability or to the unattractiveness of its presentation by the teacher. There is little doubt that the latter is the chief cause for the present lack of popularity of Nature Study.