

NATURE STUDY—No. II.

THE NEED OF NATURE STUDY.

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The infancy of every nation has been passed in open communion with nature, and has been developed under the expanding power of objective influences, the open landscapes, the tranquillity and solitude of forests, the massive grandeur and sublimity of mountains, the peace and beauty of valleys, the light-heartedness of laughing brooks, and the lofty and grave ministrations of sky and heavenly bodies.

The foundation of all education is a training of the senses, but in this artificial and introspective age we are losing sight of this objective influence of nature, ignoring the plan by which the human mind has been nourished and developed for untold generations.

Children in cities are being cut off more and more from the material most necessary for the free and healthful development of their powers. The mind is weaker, the intelligence is less active, when the child is in this way deprived of the food so necessary for mental growth. There is much more in those fresh air excursions sometimes provided for young people than a better atmosphere for a short time. The mind is being thronged at the same time with sensory stimuli, which cause brain function, and consequently mental power.

The best material for sensory training is that afforded by nature, and the time for it is especially the formative or growing period of the individual.

In our Public Schools no daily systematic training is given to the sensory side of the pupil's life. It may be claimed that some sensory training is given, recognition of words, places on maps, &c., but this, it must be admitted, is artificial and not natural material for the pupil to work upon. It lacks the multitudinous variety so apparent in Nature Study. There should be a portion of every school day set apart in our Public School course for a systematic training of the senses.

In the High Schools and Collegiates some provision is made for such work, but the time devoted to the subjects is limited, and