

receive due credit for their successful efforts. A few men highly gifted and widely travelled, or thoroughly conversant with all the details of special subjects, are consulting naturalists, and the reducers into a more general and scientific form of the facts obtained from many quarters; but still the great majority of naturalists, and among them many of the most estimable and useful, are very limited in their field of actual observation.

We have several such men in Montreal, as well as a few of somewhat more extended reputation; and there are no doubt a number of young persons who might be induced to devote some portion of their leisure to such studies, did they know of a profitable field of enquiry. To such I have no doubt that the topics of this lecture will be of interest.

Good works of art are rare and costly, good works of nature are scattered broadcast around our daily paths; and are neglected only because their familiarity prevents us from observing their surpassing beauty and interest. Nor are all of these objects known even to naturalists. There are, more especially in these new countries, scarcely any objects that have been thoroughly investigated, and there are vast numbers that are quite unknown to science. I cannot in the space of one lecture point to even the greater number of these objects,—nor is it possible to conjecture the results which may attend inquiries prosecuted in new directions. It may, however, be possible to direct your attention to some leading departments of the great field of nature, that deserve your attention.

Let us inquire in the first place for the most promising local fields of inquiry in the domain of zoology.

To begin with the lower members of the animal kingdom, I am not aware that anything has been done with our spongillæ or fresh-water sponges. Such organisms must exist in our lakes and streams, and though very low and simple in their structure, much interest attaches to their growth, nutrition and reproduction. They are soft gelatinous structures, with an internal skeleton of silicious spicula, greenish in colour, and resembling some of the fresh water algæ which live with them. Dr. Bowerbank of London is preparing a monograph of the sponges, and informs me that he will be glad to receive specimens from our waters. Here then is an opening for a young naturalist. I quote the following from Dr. Bowerbank's printed circular, and shall be glad to receive and forward specimens:—