

XV.—*The Value of Nature Study in Education.*

By JAMES FLETCHER, LL.D., F.L.S.

(Read May 23, 1901.)

It is not my purpose on this occasion to present a plea that more attention should be devoted to natural history studies by those entrusted with the education of the youth of Canada, for I am thankful to say that the educators of every Province of the Dominion have already shown that they appreciate keenly the value of these studies as an integral and effective part of a practical education. In Manitoba and the North-west Territories remarkable results are now very apparent in the improved condition of the whole country, as a direct outcome of the simple instructions on plant life, illustrated by common plants, which have been given in the rural schools for the last four or five years, in connection with the vigorous campaigns which are being annually waged against noxious weeds.

My appeal to-day is rather to the educated classes of Canada, amongst whom it must be acknowledged there is an appalling and unnecessary ignorance concerning many useful branches of knowledge, some information upon which would make them far better citizens and more efficient competitors in whatever branch of work they may have adopted as a means of obtaining a livelihood; for there is no profession, trade or occupation in which definite exact knowledge is not daily required with regard to subjects a consideration of which comes within the scope of some branch of natural science. It is to the Fellows of this Section of the Royal Society of Canada, as representatives of the educated classes of the Dominion, that I have presumed to make my appeal to-day, not but that I know they themselves all appreciate to a large extent every point I can lay before them, but it is to draw more direct attention to what I consider a most important matter, with the object of arousing their sympathy with what is now a conspicuous and very popular movement in the educational world. There is no more remarkable development in the history of the science of education than that which has lately taken place with regard to Nature Study. The Fellows of this Section must every one of them have a large influence in their own immediate circle, and I shall have succeeded well to-day if I can by any feeble effort of mine induce them to think that it is a concern of theirs to second the efforts of the educators of the country by encouraging and speaking well of this