

## NATURE-STUDY No. XXXIX.

## AGENCIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF NATURE-STUDY IN CANADA.

By Prof. W. LOCHHEAD, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que.

It may appear strange to some that the Nature-Study Movement should be able within a few years to gather the strength and take the hold that it now has in many of the provinces. While there are many persons opposed to assigning to Nature-Study the most prominent place in the time-table of the junior classes in our public schools, there are but few who oppose the study of nature by the children.

It may be truly said in the first place that the time was ripe for such a movement. For generations the natural sympathies of the child towards nature were smothered; and as a result he saw but little that was beautiful in the world about him. For generations the child was educated as a thing apart from his surroundings. Educationists had forgotten, or were ignorant of, several pedagogic principles, viz:—the senses are the avenues to the mind, and the sense perceptions give rise to definite knowledge in the mind—*Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*—new thoughts can be comprehended only by the help of old thoughts; the greater the stock of ideas possessed by the child, the greater the progress the child will make in the acquisition of knowledge or new ideas; the best development is self-development, by the encouragement of the activities of the child in the investigations of the problems presented to it; and education does not consist in the imparting of information by the teacher and its reception by the pupil. According to the modern idea it is all important that the child should have clear percepts of the things that constitute its environment, for these percepts form the basis for thought and further educational development.

But, while the schools were doing unsatisfactory work, there were several agencies in operation, which, unconsciously in some instances, were performing important educational service by encouraging many to undertake the study of natural history. The first of these were the Natural History and Field Naturalist Societies—the Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton, Wellington, being perhaps