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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

On the Cultivation in Schools of a Taste for Natural History.....	161	Spectors — Examiner — Bounding—School Commissioners— School Trustees.....	176
Minutes of the Meetings of the Catholic Committee of the Council of Public Instruction held on the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th October 1877.....	163	MISCELLANY :	
OFFICIAL NOTICES :		Economy.....	176
Appointments—School in-		Influence of Character on Education.....	176
		Training of the Children of Crown Princess of Prussia	176

On the Cultivation in Schools of a Taste for Natural History.

A Paper read before the Teachers' Convention at Sherbrooke, by T. W. FYLES, Rector of the Missisquoi High School, Sweetsburgh, P. Q.

An eminent modern divine says,—“ It is sad, if not actually censurable, to pass blindfolded through the works of God, to live in a world of flowers, and stars, and sunsets, and a thousand glorious objects of Nature, and never to have a passing interest awakened by any of them. It is a precept of the Divine Master's occurring in the Sermon on the Mount, and therefore obligatory upon all His disciples, that we should consider the lilies of the field. If Christians qualified themselves more for an interest in Nature by that which is essential to such interest, a slight knowledge of Nature, there would be among them much more purity, and therefore much more brightness and joyousness of mind.”

Goulbourn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, page 262.

Believing this I look upon a knowledge of Natural History and the ability to impart that knowledge as qualifications to be desired in the teachers of the rising generation.

There may be persons who hold such acquisitions in contempt—persons to whom the R. R. R., in their restricted meaning, complete the cycle of knowledge. Such persons, I suppose, the teacher will new and them encounter.

Some years ago, the master of a district school in a

neighbouring township was a young man whose recreations excited the surprise of his neighbours, and afforded them considerable amusement. They were wont to speak of him as “ that crazy Englishman who goes about picking up bugs”. Bugs were known to them only as foes, and an interest in bugs other than for their extermination was, in their estimation, a token of insanity; and they held the studious schoolmaster in contempt. The gentleman is still alive. His name is familiar to us all. It is PHILIP HENRY GOSSE. At the time we are speaking of he was preparing his first work (and a very delightful work it is!)—“ *The Canadian Naturalist*.”

Mr. Gosse has been a successful man. He is a member of several learned societies, and is in the enjoyment of a considerable income, the result of his labours. If he were mad, we surely may say there was a method in his madness.

The branches of Natural History which seem more especially suited to my purpose are those sister sciences (and I might call them twin-sisters),—Entomology and Botany. They can be successfully studied at little cost and slight exertion.

I shall proceed to show how I would cultivate a taste for these in my scholars.

I.—The first and most important method I should adopt would be by conversations upon them as opportunities offered—in formal lessons—extempore sermons on texts from the Book of Nature.

For instance;—Suppose that on my way to school with a party of my scholars, I pass, in the Spring, an orchard in full bloom. I direct the attention of the young people to the numerous insects hovering over the blossoms. The largest proportion of these, we find, consists (as is usually the case) of large humble-bees—formidable fellows with sharp stings. But close inspection makes known that mingled with these are several species of harmless insects closely resembling the humblebees in their modes of flight, their build, their colours, their general appearance. Such are the *Yellow-bellied Humming-bird Moth*, and the *Clear-wings Pelasgus* and *Diffinis*. The instinct of these delicate and innoxious insects leads them to consort for safety with the