

Isolated facts have been fitted and dovetailed into their proper niche in the vast mosaic. Cosmos has taken the place of chaos. In the words of Sir David Brewster, "Modern science may be regarded as one vast miracle,

whether we view it in relation to the Almighty Being, by whom its objects and its laws were formed, or to the feeble intellect of man, by which its depths have been sounded, and its mysteries explored."

NATURE STUDY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.*

BY NORMAN MACMURCHY, B.A., ELORA.

I FEEL rather out of place in appearing before you at this time, for I am sure many members of our Science Association could present the subject which we are to consider more clearly and fully than I am capable of doing. Those of you who heard a short paper I read last year before the Natural Science Section on this subject will pardon repetition, for what I have to say to you to-day will necessarily be to some extent in the same line.

I am very glad Mr. J. L. Hughes is to speak to us. A year ago, when listening to his address "On the Influence of Kindergarten Spirit on Higher Education," I felt that I would have liked to have said what he said so well, at an earlier hour that day, when I had been speaking to our own Section on Nature Study.

This seems an opportune time to discuss Nature Study in our Public schools, particularly from the point of view of its educational value. It is a matter which is occupying the minds of teachers. At one of the meetings of the Training Department of this Association the report of an important committee, composed of the leading educationalists of the Province will be given—

1st. "On the educational value of subjects."

- (a) Value for discipline.
- (b) Value for culture.
- (c) Value for use.

2nd. "What subjects should be taught in our public schools."

Again, in the United States the importance of the study of nature in elementary schools was pointed out and urged by the reports of the committees of ten and fifteen to the National Teachers' Association a few years ago. In those schools where Nature Studies have been introduced the results point to their educational value. In addition we seem to have come to a period in our educational progress when changes are about to be made, not alone in the subjects taught, but also, possibly, in the methods of instruction.

Before making changes we should weigh well those proposed. To do so we should inform ourselves of the relative values of subjects. At present we will more particularly confine ourselves to pointing out the value of Elementary Science or Nature Study.

We, the science masters of our high schools, hope to arrive at the same end as the Kindergarteners, viz: "the self-activity of the child." We wish to enable the child to educate himself by giving him something to do in accord with his mental development, and so to cultivate his senses that he may acquire the power to make accurate observations, a process which must always precede accurate thinking. We have been led to this view from dealing with pupils coming from our public schools, who

*Paper read at O. E. A. April, '97.