

"Of all beasts he learned the language,
 Learned their names, and all their secrets,
 How the beavers built their lodges,
 Where the squirrels hid their acorns,
 How the reindeer ran so swiftly,
 Why the rabbit was so timid,
 Talked with them, when e'er he met them.
 Called them, Hiawatha's brothers."

Here was an ideal teacher of nature. There was no dissecting but an interest in what they did.

By some such simple method, the child should, in the course of an ordinary school life, become acquainted with the names of all our common trees and plants. As soon as he is able, he should note likenesses and differences, beginning with the grosser and gradually extending to the finer details, but the teacher must keep within the limits of interest, direct his efforts, yet see that knowledge is acquired through his own self-activity. Classification into orders, genera, and species, should be left for advanced public school work or for introduction to high school work.

While becoming acquainted with the names of trees and plants, quite young pupils can begin systematic work which requires only keen eyes and an interested mind to accomplish. They should note where the plants grow; the kind of soil; the color, etc., and prepare lists of plants according to habitat:

Plants growing in water, sagittaria, eel grass; plants growing in sandy soil, clotbur, evening primrose; plants growing in woods, lily, anemone.

If such work as this is begun in a second form and continued throughout the school course, the child would have a store of information about plants which would be of the greatest value, whatever his future might be.

Another line of work, similar in nature, is grouping plants according to time of flowering, at first by seasons, then by months, and later by definite limiting dates, showing earliest and latest appearance in bloom.

As a guide to teachers, and as an indication of the work that might be done by the pupil in the course of seven or eight years, a list of common plants is given in the appendix, grouped according to habitat and color of flowers, with the time of flowering indicated by figures, denoting the month, and letters denoting the seasons.

The study of plants so far, in the schools of Canada, has been almost entirely limited to minute descriptions of individual plants with a view to their exact classification. While this work is quite in place for the advanced student, it is quite unsuited to the younger classes. Furthermore, the basis of classification has been the flower to the exclusion of the leaf. As the latter is a much more permanent part of the plant than the flower, a classification based upon it has many advantages. In any case children should be trained to recognize plants by their leaves and general appearance, so that they can gather them at any time during the season and examine them.

After a class has once learned to know a plant, it should be collected at regular intervals, say every month, and its development and changes noted. The importance of such examination may be seen in the case of the dandelion, which immediately after flowering season should be examined daily, until the fruit is