NATURAL HISTORY AS A BRANCH OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION.

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I am persuaded that great good would result from making the study of natural history one of the most elementary branches of education. Children should be taught to see carefully and minutely, and thus early learn to observe and compare, a most important part of education. Their attention should be directed to the more common objects by which they are surrounded.

The chipping bird that pecks at crumbs in the yard, and nests in the currant bush, what a warm, light and beautiful feather-coat it wears, its wings are only a variety of hands which enable it to fly where we cannot follow. See how it hops, with one foot a little in advance of the other, in place of running, or walking like the chickens. All birds that perch on trees move by hops, when on the ground.

The ant that labors so diligently in the garden—observe its six feet, its pinchers to clip and cut its food, its antennae, by means of which it makes its wants known to other ants. How busily they are running up and down that tree. Watch and we shall find that they have discovered the locality of their cows (plant lice), and are in haste to sip the sweet fluid secreted by these curious insects.

See the "pinch bug," that comes stumbling in at the open window, attracted by the light. Observe its antennae; how curious its eyes, how large. All beetles have a beautiful box fastened on their backs, in which are neatly packed their delicate, transparent wings. They elevate the two lids (wing cases), and unfold the glacy wings, then they prepare to fly.
What curious claws, like forks, this fellow has to enable him to hold on securely. What stout jaws. You see they open sideways, instead of up and down, like all the large animals. There too is the butterfly that flutters on the garden flowers, sucking with its long tongue, the sweets of the blossoms. It has no pincers; like the ant and bee it cannot bite. What large beautiful wings, four in number. See the long "feeler," with a nob on the end. The spider, that spreads its lace trap, to catch heedless flies, the grasshopper that springs up from the grass. All, these thing should be a subject of thought, observation, and comparison; for it is by comparison that we form ideas of the differences which exist between things; by comparison alone that we reach conclusions the most valuable for the development of mind and the acquisition of knowledge.

How common the mistake parents and, I am sorry to say, teachers often make, in impressing the young and sensitive mind with horror and alarm, at the sight of the more harmless, and in all cases, beautiful works of God. Impressions thus made in youth, are very permanent and should be carefully avoided. We should be ever watchful that nothing prejudicial finds a lodgment in the minds of our children.

There is nothing farther from the truth, than that "any one is qualified to teach primary schools." It is far more difficult to teach the rudiments with profit than the more advanced branch of any subject. Especially is this true of Natural History. I am aware of the difficulty, the lack of qualified teachers; but let the demand be made with sufficient emphasis and the supply will be furnished. The law of demand and supply is as good in education as in commerce.