

**HAND-BOOK OF THE ST.
NICHOLAS
AGASSIZ ASSOCIATION**

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Hand-Book of the St. Nicholas Agassiz Association by Harlan H. Ballard

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HARLAN H. BALLARD

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AGASSIZ ASSOCIATION**

HAND-BOOK
OF THE 43
ST. NICHOLAS
AGASSIZ ASSOCIATION.

BY HARLAN H. BALLARD,
PRINCIPAL OF LENOX ACADEMY.

Second Edition.

Bring us the airs of hills and forests,
The sweet aroma of birch and pine,
Give us a waft of the north-wind laden
With sweetbrier odors, and breath of kine!

Whittier.

LENOX, MASS.
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1884.

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CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF THE A. A.

THE ORIGIN.

The Agassiz Association, for the observation and study of natural objects, was founded in 1875 by the writer, in connection with a school which he was then teaching in Lenox, Mass. It was the outgrowth of a life-long love for Nature, and a belief that education is incomplete unless it include some practical knowledge of the common objects that surround us. For several years the little school society continued its work pleasantly and with profit. The President gradually came to the opinion (strengthened by reading an account of a somewhat similar, though far more limited, organ-

Agassiz Club 3-7-79

ization in Switzerland), that there might be other communities in which a like society would be welcomed, and several branch societies were organized. To test the matter more fully, having obtained the cordial co-operation of the editors of the *ST. NICHOLAS*, the leading publication for the young in the United States, a general invitation to unite in the work was published in 1880, in the November number of that magazine. It was substantially as follows :

THE INVITATION.

You must know that, across the ocean and over the Alps, the boys and girls of Switzerland have a bright idea. They have formed a society, and they have a badge. The badge is a spray of evergreen, and the society is a Natural History Society.

Once a year, in the spring time, when the sun has lifted the ice-curtain from the lakes, so that the fishes can look out, and the flowers can look in, the children from far and near come together for a meeting and a holiday. They are the boys and girls for a tramp. Their sturdy legs and long staves, their strong bodies and short dresses, their gay stockings and stout shoes prove that beyond a question.

The long golden hair of the girls, tightly braided and firmly knotted with gay ribbons, flashes brightly as they go clambering over rocks, leaping across rivulets, scrambling along glaciers, and climbing steep cliffs.

When the village schoolmaster, who usually leads these excursions, blows his horn, back come the children like laughing echoes, with baskets, pockets, boxes and bags full of the treasures of the wood.

Then they eat their dinner as we would take a picnic, and after that, spread out their trophies, and decide who has found the most, and who the rarest. They get the master to name them, if he can, and laugh in mischievous triumph when he fails.

With the lengthening shadows, the children return to their homes, and arrange their mosses, ferns and flowers, their pebbles, and beetles and butterflies, in cabinets, and declare, in their quaint accents, that they have had a glorious time. And have they not? The fresh, crisp air, the holiday, the sunshine, the picnic, the gathered specimens, and a teacher to tell them Latin names! No wonder they enjoy it. Would not you?

But on reflection we have all those things in this country, could we once bring them together in the right proportions. We have holidays enough—there are Saturdays. School-masters are as plentiful as schools. This is the same sun that shines on Switzerland, and it can find golden hair to kindle, without waiting for the sea to turn under it. Why, then, cannot we have a Natural History Society in America? In fact, we already have a little one, up here in these Berkshire Hills. And we enjoy it so thoroughly, and learn so much from it, that we wish it to grow larger.

Not many of you need be told why we have named our Society "THE AGASSIZ ASSOCIATION." There are few readers of *St. Nicholas* that have not heard something of the life and work of that famous man—so universally honored and beloved—Professor Louis Agassiz. In 1846 the great Naturalist left his native Switzerland, made America his home, accepted a Professorship at Harvard College, and

built up the greatest school of Natural History in this country. Though one of the most learned, he was also one of the most devout and gentle of men.

Prof. Alexander Agassiz lends his cordial approval to our Society and its work, and has very kindly given us permission to use his father's name.

THE RESPONSE.

This invitation has met a response at once gratifying and unexpected. A very general interest in the study of Nature has been evinced by young and old. Classes or local "Chapters" have been formed in different towns, under the direction of the central organization, and where this has been impracticable, individuals have joined as corresponding members. Within three years and a half, more than seven thousand students have been aided, and six hundred and fifty local Scientific Societies established. Though originally planned as an aid to young people, the interest of the older ones has proved even greater, and we are gratified to find on our roll of membership the names of many fathers and mothers, teachers and professors. Several of our chapters are composed wholly of adults—many of old and young working together. "Family Chapters" are among our most successful branches.

SCHOOL SOCIETIES.

As the A. A. has become better known, it has found a wide field of usefulness in connection with schools, both private and public. Many teachers who have not been able to find a place for Natural Science in the ordinary school curriculum, and who have yet felt that their pupils should not grow up

strangers to the flowers, trees, birds and butterflies, have been glad to devote an hour once a fortnight to the guidance of a meeting devoted to these studies. In almost every school may be found as many as six of the more intelligent boys and girls who will willingly spend an evening now and then in united study and discussion. The young are naturally fond of collecting. Most school committees will cheerfully grant the use of a room for the meetings, and many will even provide suitable cases for the specimens. No one need hesitate about organizing a local branch of our Society, from fear that his knowledge is too limited. We shall give full directions for beginning the work, and suggest several courses of study in a subsequent chapter. Many difficulties will be removed by correspondence with other classes that have surmounted the obstacles and passed the dangers which lie at the entrance of this, as of all other paths. The President of the A. A. is ready to render all the aid in his power, by referring you to the best books in the several departments, and by introducing you to one or more of the Specialists that have most generously volunteered their invaluable services to our Society.

SPECIAL CLASSES.

Among the pleasant features of the A. A. have been our special courses of study. These have been conducted by men high in their departments, and have always been free. Dr. Marcus E. Jones, of Salt Lake City, has taken a class through elementary Botany; Prof. G. Howard Parker has directed a six months' course in Entomology; Prof. E. L. French, of Wells College, has managed a very successful