

## OUR BOOKSHELF.

*Birds Beneficial to Agriculture: Economic Series No. 9, British Museum (Natural History).* By F. W. Frohawk. Pp. vi+47. (London: British Museum (Natural History), 1919.) Price 2s.

It is important that attention should be focussed now and again on the benefits that accrue to farmer and gardener from the activities of birds, for too frequent reiteration of misdemeanours tends to produce an antagonism which the facts do not warrant; and there is greater danger in indiscriminate destruction than in indiscriminate protection. Recognising these facts, the Trustees of the British Museum have done good service, at once to the farmer and to the naturalist, in publishing this pamphlet, and in preparing the special exhibit to which it makes an efficient and attractive guide.

Of the birds the presence of which in Britain is of any importance in this connection, "120 species may be regarded as decidedly beneficial to agriculture generally," and of these Mr. Frohawk describes in detail a very fair sample of forty-four species, and adds besides two short general notices, necessarily somewhat perfunctory in treatment, on birds in their relation to injurious insects and to agriculture. Careful illustrations by the author make easy the task of identifying a large proportion of the species described. It is to be regretted, however, in a work dealing primarily with economic values that more space could not have been given to feeding habits and food statistics, even at the expense of specific characters and of habits of less immediate importance. Nevertheless, this latest addition to the "Economic Series" of British Museum Publications should help to awaken and broaden interest in the valuable heritage which Britain possesses in its birds.

*Rudiments of Handicraft.* By W. A. S. Benson. Pp. 40. (London: John Murray, 1919.) Price 1s. net.

THIS is a forty-page pamphlet, illustrated by fourteen pages of sketches, which attempts to set forth the principles and practice of manual training for children between the ages of eight and twelve, taking wood in the form of sawn laths  $1\frac{1}{8}$  in. wide and  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. thick as the material to be used.

The idea of the use of strip wood manipulated by quite simple tools is by no means new, having been adopted in certain important educational centres more than twenty years ago. It is difficult to realise how some of the exercises figured in the book can be made into the substantial structures for which they are designed on the methods described, and many of the drawings leave much to be desired from both the technical and artistic points of view. It is just as important for the pupil to be taught to make an accurate drawing in plan elevation and section of the object

he purposes to produce as it is for him to execute it.

The well-trained manual instructor who ought to find an honoured place in every school will search in vain for much that is really helpful to him in the pamphlet. The principle of hand and eye training and of its high and necessary educational value is now fully admitted by educationists and is well established, and a large body of capable men fully trained in teaching methods are now available who have formed themselves into an association and assemble in annual conference with the view of promoting the efficiency of their work.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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## National Representation upon International Councils.

IN the account of the meeting of the International Research Council (NATURE, August 14, p. 464) it is stated that "the United Kingdom" was "represented" on the council by "delegates." The explanation in the first paragraph of your Notes of September 4 of how the "delegates" were appointed shows that the words are the expression of an intention rather than of a fact. The council apparently wished that its decisions should have some authority other than that derived from the personal distinction of its members, but their wishes remained unfulfilled because there is in existence no machinery for selecting a delegation representative of the scientific workers of this country. It seems worth while, therefore, to inquire what characteristics such machinery must have in order that it should fulfil this purpose, and how such machinery could be set in action.

I suggest that the machinery necessary and sufficient would be such as secures that every professional scientific worker is informed of any action that it is proposed to take which may affect his work and that he has a constitutional means of expressing his opinion upon the proposal. It does not appear to be necessary that any attempt should be made to obtain the equality of voting power which is important in a representative body concerned with political and economic questions—so long, of course, as such questions are excluded from the domain of the body and its attention is confined to purely scientific matters.

The chief difficulty in establishing such machinery is that of defining the class of professional scientific workers. It ought to be overcome by the method used in defining the members of other professions. Lawyers, architects, actuaries, and medical practitioners are defined by membership of certain professional societies, of which the distinctive feature is that they admit to membership all who have undergone certain training and acquired certain experience. Societies having this feature already exist in the profession of science; the various scientific and engineering institutions and institutes are examples. They do not at present cover the whole field, but it will probably be agreed that it is desirable that they should. The best way of securing the representation of science would be to set up institutes for those branches of science which do not already possess