

esthetic value, — beauty of form and plumage, and sweetness of song—birds are chiefly prized for their economic value, especially in keeping down insect pests, and for eating weed seeds, and in preying upon rats, mice, and other destroyers of our grain and fruit trees, and in acting as scavengers.

In a report of the Department of Agriculture at Washington, issued in 1912, Dr. Henshaw estimates the loss to the agricultural interests of that country at upwards of \$700,000,000 from insects alone. Our loss is certainly proportional; and this loss is caused chiefly by an insufficiency of bird life, on our cultivated lands. "Experience the world over has shown that as bird life decreases insects increase; also, that birds are more efficient in keeping down insect pests than all other agencies, natural and artificial, combined."

[Cuts supplied by Messrs. Ginn & Co., Boston. Figures 1 and 3 from 'Agriculture for Beginners'; 2. from Hodge's 'Nature Study and Life.']

#### PARISH MEETING AT GLASSVILLE.

A meeting, called by Inspector Dixon, of teachers in the Parish of Aberdeen, Carleton County, was held early in March, in the Glassville school house. Ten teachers were present, and the meeting proved to be instructive and enjoyable. The following subjects were briefly discussed:—Sanitation; under this head came the question of getting rid of the house-fly, and of the use of dust-bane. Arithmetic, how to teach the metric system practically, by letting the children measure walls, desks, books, etc., in metric measures; arithmetic problems bearing on the life of the community, as farming or lumbering, were advocated. Reading:—the common defects were noticed, and the importance of distinctness in reading and speaking was dwelt upon. In dealing with the writing-lesson, the muscular movement was given first place in the discussion. Under the head of nature-study, the speakers strongly advocated field-days, when the pupils, and especially the younger ones, could learn to observe the birds, flowers, effects of rain or snow and other signs of nature's work; that they should be questioned as to their daily observations on the way to and from school, and be encouraged to make collections. The teaching of patriotism was talked over, and lessons on the war and on the use of the flag were suggested.

#### SPRING NATURE STUDY.

L. A. DEWOLFE.

The spring unrest is again in the air. The next few months will be the Nature Student's Paradise.

Possibly no more fascinating exercise can be assigned to school children than the reporting of the date and locality of the first appearance of each spring flower and of each migratory bird. Detailed description of the bird is desirable. The plant should accompany the report. There is, then, no possibility of mistaken reports.

In Nova Scotia, such work has been done for many years under the heading "Phenological Observations." Some teachers are so mechanical, however, as to accept reports only of the plants and birds on the printed schedule; and, even then, the accuracy of the observations is seldom verified. The printed list is all right for an official report; but so soon as the child's observations are prescribed, the child loses his individuality. Encourage him to observe and report everything; and give him public credit by recording the observations on the school blackboard.

If the exercise is made merely a contest for the largest number of credits, it has lost its educational value. The contest is natural and enjoyable. Suggest, however, details to look for; and discuss the significance of these details in the great scheme of nature.

For example, the alder catkins are now unfolding in sunny situations. The botanist feels it his duty to classify them with mathematical exactness, count their parts, place them in their proper pigeon-hole in the scale of evolution, and then consign their dead bodies to some musty collection where other botanists at other times can bring other specimens of the same species for comparison. Children are not interested in that. They want to know why this or that part is made as it is. What has this to do with the life-history of the plant? Has the plant any bird friends or insect friends? Why are some catkins different from others on the same shrub? What will become of these catkins later? Have they lived in vain? These and a score of other questions will come to the child's mind if the teacher, through one or two