

The English Sparrow.

At a recent meeting of the Farmers' Club at Elmira, N. Y., a letter of inquiry was presented as to the English sparrow, whether its introduction was likely to result in injury or otherwise. Mr. E. Loomis, an English agriculturist, now travelling in this country, and present at the meeting, answered the inquiries as follows, as to the sparrow in England:—

In England sparrows are very plentiful—in some districts their numbers are so great that farmers have felt much alarm, expecting them to destroy their crops of small grain. Years ago the parish authorities, in many instances, voted sums of money to be used in payment for the destruction of the birds, and accordingly they were destroyed in great numbers, boys undertaking the work stimulated by the reward and delighted by the fun of shooting. Now, however, the feeling is very much changed. I have heard of cases where a single bird has revealed in its crop when cut open as many as fifteen or twenty wire-worms, and these worms if left to do their mischief would injure the crops very much. Within my recollection it has been a common practice to poison the sparrows and to use any means to effect their destruction. But when it was found that they were engaged in the good work of aiding farmers by capturing the worst pests in the fields, there was a great change in the estimation in which they were held. Sparrows breed enormously and they are also ravenous feeders, and remarkable for their tireless activity. But when all these qualities are exerted mainly for the good of the farmer, as they really are, there need be no fear that the birds will become unmanageable pests. It is true that here and there a spot may be found in the wheat field, where the sparrows have done mischief, but on the whole I believe it has become the opinion that they do far more good than hurt. And if this be true in England how much more reason there is in this country for tolerating the birds, for insect life abounds much more here. On the whole I think the correspondent may quiet his fears, for in balancing the accounts I am very confident there will be a good credit left to the sparrows after all their mischief is fully charged up.

DEATH TO THE SPARROWS.—In various parts of the country an unusual mortality is noticed among the English sparrows. It is thought the birds, in eating the potato bug, are poisoned by paris green.

Prize for Tree-Planting.

The Massachusetts Society for Promotion of Agriculture has offered a series of prizes for the encouragement of tree-planting in New York State—the awards to be made 10 years from the 1st of March next, for the best results produced in the interval. The white ash, the European larch and the white and Scotch pine are the varieties especially favored. Something has been done already toward promoting a new centennial growth of trees, and the inducements offered will give another impulse to the work. Mr. Sargent, of the new Arboretum of Harvard College, estimates that over 1,000,000 of trees will be planted in Massachusetts this year.

The carrot crop is rendered useless in many gardens by grubs eating into the roots. This takes place in many well-managed gardens. The best remedy that I have tried was to scatter a quantity of soot and lime over the surface of the ground before forking it over for the carrots. This works it into the ground, and keeps the soil free from all sorts of grubs for the whole season. The next best way is to sow the lime and soot between the rows and hoe it into the ground.

THE IVY.—Why is it that every one is pleased with the common ivy? There is a charm about that plant which all feel, but none can tell why. Observe it hanging from the arch of some old bridge, and consider the degree of interest it gives to that object. The bridge itself may be beautifully situated; the stream passing through its arches clear and copious; but still it is the ivy which gives the finish and picturesque effect. Mouldering towers and castles, and ruined cloisters, interest our feelings in a degree more or less by the circumstances of their being covered or not, by the ivy. Precipices, which else would exhibit only their naked, barren walls, are clothed by it in a rich and beautiful vesture. Old trees, whose trunks it surrounds, assume a great variety of aspects; and, indeed, it is a most important agent in

forming the beauty and variety of rural landscape. And it is as useful as it is beautiful; the ivy is of vast advantage to the smaller birds, as it affords them shelter in winter, and a retreat for building their nests in spring and summer. It is in fructification in October and November, and the sweet juice which its flowers exude supports an infinity of insects in autumn, while its berries are a store of nutriment for many birds in early spring.

THE PEACH BARK LOUSE.—The *Rural World* gives the following directions for the extermination of this destructive insect:—The trees should be closely pruned, and the bark and limbs brushed with a stiff brush in winter. A light painting of linseed oil would also at that time destroy such as were not removed with the brush. When the bulk of the eggs are hatching, and the young, which are then minute white specks, are moving slowly over the tree, a good syringing with whale oil soap will destroy them.

The *American Journal of Agriculture* gives us this pretty hint:—“Fringed Gentian is among the loveliest of all autumn flowers and is invaluable for paper decoration. If the plant be gathered just as the first flowers appear, and put in water in a light, airy place, every bud will expand into a lovely blue flower. The only care is to keep the glass filled with fresh water, as one plant not unfrequently has from twenty to fifty buds in different stages of development. It lasts in perfection a long time, often a month or more.”

The *Scientific Farmer* says:—“The amount of good done by chickens among fruit trees can hardly be estimated. We completely conquered the canker worm in an orchard of 100 trees, in two years' time, by colonizing a flock of 50 chickens or so in the midst of the lot not to mention the ceaseless missionary work undertaken by the biddies in the surrounding gardens and fields. We always preserve all the birds, too, not begrudging them a few cherries and berries.”

The *American Pomological Report* says:—The rule that the roots will be found as far from the base of the trunk as the entire height of the tree, after many examinations has invariably been found within bounds. In many cases they extend to a much greater distance. Even young dwarf pears, the quince roots of which are commonly supposed to be quite short and confined to a dense mass of fibres near the base of the tree, I have easily traced to a distance from the tree equal to its height.

MANURE FOR FRUIT TREES.—The Western New York Horticultural Society lately discussed the question of manure for fruit trees. One member said he had used superphosphate of lime with good results. Another member said he had seen more benefit resulting from superphosphate the second year than the first, especially when the first was a dry season. Another member preferred wood ashes. He once used 1,800 bushels of leached ashes on the sandy soil of his orchard and vineyard with very great advantage, applying it at the ratio of 300 bushels per acre. The quality as well as size and yield of fruit was very much improved. Another member considered barn-yard manure as furnishing all the elements required for growth and fertility. Fruit-growers should, therefore, manufacture all the manure they can, by keeping horses, cattle, pigs, poultry, and gathering up all the litter, &c., for the manure pile. Some people are liable to make mistakes in using stimulating manures as fertilizers for fruit crops.

A correspondent of the *Chataqua Farmer* says:—“Let me speak for the crow. Last year, as I was harrowing corn with a vibrating harrow, having teeth (you know it is a noisy thing), it uncovered a great number of white grubs which you could see all about the ground; they are very destructive to vegetation of all kinds. They ate or destroyed thousands of hills of corn that year. You could see the track of the grub as he traveled to get something to eat, for they travel when in search of food. You could see the surface of the ground a little elevated and checked when it is hard and dry. Well, you see, when I was harrowing, as soon as the crows heard the harrow at work they would come and light on the ground that was being harrowed, and the fresher the better they liked it; when going one way they would light after I had passed along; when I returned, and came within six or eight rods of them, they would rise gently and circle round in the rear again. I have counted as many as seventeen grubs that one crow picked up at one lighting. They take any and everything, large and small, that is, worms,

grubs and beetles. Crows can't pull corn when planted with a machine; and we have no fear of them from that source. Finally, wherever civilization is there are rooks and crows.”

Bees are necessary to some kinds of clover. Thus 20 heads of Dutch clover yielded 2,290 seeds; but 20 other heads, protected from bees, produced not one. Humble bees alone visit red clover, as other bees cannot reach the nectar. The number of humble bees in any district depends greatly on the number of field mice, which destroy their combs and nests. More than two-thirds of them are thus destroyed all over England. Near villages and small towns nests of humble bees are more numerous than elsewhere, which is attributed to the cats killing the mice.—*Darwin's Origin of Species.*

By spent hops I mean hops that have done their duty in the brew-house, but which can do more valuable service on the soil of our land. I have used hops on potato ground in this way—first, by spreading the hops on the ground as though I were giving it a good coating of well decomposed manure, and when I have dug a trench, before I lay the sets in, I put some of the hops in the trench so that the sets are laid upon them, and then cover them in, and so on. I find that the potatoes turn out fine in size, very clean, and very free from disease. I do not know what chemicals the hops contain, but certainly there is something in them that the potato is very fond of. If any of your readers would give them a trial, I think they would derive a great benefit therefrom.—*London Gardeners' Chronicle.*

Poultry Yard.

Making Hens Lay.

The production of eggs is one of the most profitable branches of the poultry business. Properly managed, hens pay from one to three hundred per cent. profit as layers. Neglected, they cause loss, and are a ‘bill of expense.’ To get the best results, too many should not be kept together. Of large breeds, 20 or 30 hens are sufficient. Of Leghorns, or smaller breeds, not more than 30 to 50. They lay as well without a cock, and their eggs keep longer. Plenty of room should be given. One square yard of space indoors is none too much for each fowl. Their droppings should be cleaned up at least three times a week. A bed of dry earth for a floor they delight in. A box of dry dirt and ashes is essential for dusting in. Provide suitable nests and nest eggs. Give plenty of clean, pure water; keep quarters clean, well ventilated, dry and comfortable. If hens have free range in summer, they obtain from animal or insect and vegetable life most of the materials which compose the substance of an egg. The conditions being right, any hen will lay. The natural and best conditions, then, are found in summer. Imitate these as nearly as possible, and our hens will lay in winter. We must supply artificially in cold weather the wants which nature supplies in warm weather. A hen is a machine for converting a compound of raw material into one of the most nutritious and highly organized substances—the egg; but the machine will not work unless it is in perfect order. Before laying, the hen must be in good health, condition and feathers, and must be kept so; for laying is a severe and exhaustive drain upon the system. The feed of laying fowls must consist of grain in variety, wheat and buckwheat being best, and not over one-half corn in winter, and one-fourth in summer. Cooked feed daily serves in various ways, also milk, fresh meats and scraps, raw bones or ground bone, three times a week at least, with plenty of gravel and broken oyster shells constantly accessible. Cooked vegetables are necessary, but when confined, raw onions, turnips, apples, and cabbage should be given three or four times a week, in good supply. The first feed each day should be mush, and the last grain; excepting Asiatics, give all they will eat, but no more. Watch, study and supply their tastes, wants and comforts. Care well for and feed your hens properly, they will not disappoint you, unless it be in ‘shelling out’ large returns and making a handsome ‘balance sheet,’ on the profit side.

Skimmed milk, or sour milk, or milk in any condition, is a most excellent drink for poultry. It is meat and drink both. Some of the finest chickens we ever saw were raised upon the free use of milk with their food.