

THE STARLING.

SIR,—I am sending you by this mail a copy of the *Bath Chronicle* newspaper, dated 18th Dec., 1890, which contains an article on a subject that I think may prove of some interest to the members of your Association—I refer to that on page 6, the subject being a bird called the starling, very common all over Europe. I have no doubt it would prove a valuable aid to farmers and gardeners on this side of the Atlantic, and I would suggest that a few of these useful birds should be imported during the coming spring and turned loose in our gardens and fields. Possibly your Association might feel disposed to take the initiative in such an important matter by undertaking to procure a supply of these useful insect destroyers. You will observe that they differ in every respect from the sparrow, whose aid to horticulturists is of a very doubtful character. I can remember our garden in the suburbs of London being much frequented by it in flocks during the autumn and winter months. Being a hardy bird, I can see no reason why they should not be well adapted to all parts of Canada, and remain with us during the whole season. My observation leads me to suppose that this country is much in need of insectivorous birds, and quite as much in winter, as in summer. I shall be glad to see the subject inquired into by all interested in horticulture.

Yours truly,

E. D. ARNAUD, *Annapolis, N. S.*

Mr. T. McIlwraith, of Hamilton, one of the leading ornithologists in Ontario, replies as follows:

SIR,—In reply to your letter regarding the European Starling, I may say that it is not found in this country except in captivity.

Throughout Europe it is very generally distributed, and breeds in large numbers in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In Norway it is found as far north as Tromsø during the summer, and in Siberia it gets as high as 57° N. lat. At the approach of cold weather the birds travel southward, vast flocks spending the winter along the shores of the Mediterranean sea.

A very decided increase has been observed in the number of these birds lately, they being now common where twenty years ago they were not known at all. Their food consists chiefly of worms, slugs, small molluscs, flies, beetles, ticks and other insects, they are also known to take small fruit occasionally, and have been accused of destroying the eggs and young of other birds, chiefly those of the skylark. The latter habit, if true, is much to be regretted, but it has been so often disputed that it cannot be practised to any great extent. The nest is usually built in a hole in a tree or bank, and very often on a ledge under an overhanging rock near the sea. They are very social in their habits, being found in large flocks at all seasons of the year. In civilized life they rear their young among the interstices of the Gothic architecture of church spires and monuments of the large cities, and often create work for the tradesman by planting their untidy nest in places intended to carry off the rain from the roofs of the houses.

They do not rank high as song birds, but they make such a variety of noises, with so much spirit, and accompanied with so much amusing gesticulation, that they are looked upon with general favor. They have great powers of mimicry, and on this account are often kept as cage birds, when with careful teaching many of them become quite accomplished.