

I have come, sir, to say a few words about our birds, the native birds of our woods and orchards, and their economic relations with the farmer, fruit grower and gardener.

With one exception I am glad to be able to speak of them all as friends, and that one exception I need scarcely say is the English sparrow. This, as we all know, is not a native of the country, but an imported species which finding here climatic and other conditions suited to its wants, has made up its mind to stay, and has increased at a rate for which we find no parallel in the history of any other bird.

In Canada there has been no concerted action towards getting statistics of its increase and habits, but in the United States, where it first settled and where its depredations first attracted notice, the government has at great expense obtained reports of its operations in every State where it has settled. All concur in the opinion that it now effects prejudicially the interests of the farmer, fruit grower and gardener to a greater extent than any other bird, while its rapid spread and increase renders it impossible to predict where the evil is to end.

Among the *direct* charges brought against the sparrow by the fruit growers is that of visiting the orchard in the early spring and doing serious injury by eating out the germs of the fruit buds; the peach, pear, plum, apricot, cherry, apple, currant, grape being all sufferers.

Later in the season, its visits to the vegetable garden are equally disastrous, for it attacks lettuce, peas, beets, radishes, cabbages and cauliflowers as soon as they appear above the surface, and even the seed has been taken up and devoured before it has had time to germinate. So great, indeed, has been the injury thus sustained, that in many localities the market gardeners have found it necessary to cover their garden beds with netting to prevent the total destruction of the crops. As the season advances the ripe fruit is attacked, and besides what is eaten, large quantities of apples, pears, peaches, plums, tomatoes, grapes and strawberries are destroyed by having holes pecked in the sides, causing the fruit to drop on the ground or decay on the branches.

In some localities where the grape industry once flourished, it is no longer possible to continue it with profit on account of the sparrow pest, though some growers, as a last resource, have tried to save their crops by enclosing the ripening clusters in paper bags.

While hundreds of reports have been sent in to the Department of Agriculture from different points in the union confirming the truth of the foregoing statement, others equally numerous are available to shew that the farmer does not escape the general scourge. The purport of these may be summed up in the words of Mr. Hoadly, who has been intrusted with the collection of evidence:—

“Annoying and injurious as the sparrow is to the fruit grower and vegetable gardener, the loss it inflicts on the producer of cereals is still greater.

Though for its permanent residence it prefers populous cities and places of abundant traffic and commotion, still, in anticipation of the harvest season, it gathers in enormous flocks, and leaving the cities and towns moves off into the surrounding country to feed upon the ripening grain. Its consumption and waste of corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley and buckwheat in many parts of the country is enormous. It feeds on the kernel when it is in the soft, milky state, as well as when it has matured and hardened, and in fields of ripe grain it scatters upon the ground even more than it consumes. Instances have been reported where in place of a full or fair crop, only the straw remained to be gathered.”