

## THE ENGLISH SPARROW.

BY J. BALLANTYNE.

*(Read February 21st, 1890.)*

You are all aware that it is but a short time since the bird known by the name of "The English Sparrow" was introduced into North America, yet, notwithstanding this fact, it has increased in numbers so fast that it has now spread over nearly a third of the whole continent and is extending its area at the rate of about 275,000 square miles annually. It is highly probable that there are more of these sparrows at the present time in North America than of any single species of native bird. The presence of so many of them has become a question of such economic importance that the United States Department of Agriculture has issued a bulletin containing upwards of 400 closely printed pages relating wholly to the English Sparrow in North America, especially in its relation to agriculture. Attention to this bulletin has already been called in the last number of the OTTAWA NATURALIST. It deals with the whole question in a most exhaustive manner, entering fully into details concerning its introduction and diffusion, rate of increase and checks on the same. It also gives the replies from hundreds of observers from all parts of the country relating to the good and bad effects of sparrows on vegetation. Subsequently it points out the relation of sparrows to native birds, showing clearly that many of our insect-eating birds have been completely routed by the invaders. The conclusions arrived at by an overwhelming majority of observers are, that sparrows are more or less injurious to nearly all growing crops, including all our common fruits as well as grain and vegetables, and what little good they do would have been better done by our native birds had they not been driven away. The bulletin also gives an account of various methods which have been tried, in different localities, to destroy the sparrows, such as poisoning, trapping, shooting, etc. The methods most approved are pulling down their nests when this can be done, and persistent shooting. They become so wary that it is difficult to either trap or poison them.

Perhaps it may not be generally known that a great many colonies.