

THE MARITIME AGRICULTURIST.

Devoted to the Interests of the Farmers, Stock Breeders and Horsemen of the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

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SPRING BULLETIN.

We are in receipt of the spring bulletin issued by the secretary for agriculture of New Brunswick. It comprises the answers to a list of questions sent to correspondents in representative sections of the province and gives in small compass the crop prospects for the present year. With few exceptions the returns show crops better than for some years past. A larger area under cultivation than formerly, that hay is very promising, and that all stock wintered well, as indicated by the reported abundance of old hay on hand and by the early spring and favorable winter.

—It is bad policy to be haughty, repellent or unsocial. The most resolute aspirant to wealth or position may stumble as he climbs, and, if no one stretches out a finger to save him, may roll headlong to a depth far below the point from which he started. A lift for a lift is the business rule of to-day.

OUR USEFUL INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS.

An insectivorous bird is not necessarily a useful one. There are two classes of insects: beneficial and injurious, and the class upon which the bird feeds, and the quantity of grain it steals is the standard by which we judge its value to the farmer, and its utility. For years ornithologists have been at work upon the subject and have arrived at a classification of birds that are destructive to grain and beneficial insects, and those that are decidedly beneficial. This classification was made upon the results of numerous post-mortem examinations and extending over several years, so that in the majority of cases it is moderately correct, although the surroundings control the variety of food to no small extent.

Among our common birds, the swallows, nighthawks, whip-poor-wills do a great deal of good by catching insects on the wing. The two latter destroy many flies and moths at night. The cuckoo devours the tent caterpillars that proved so destructive to orchards some seasons. The little blue bird feeds upon both grain and injurious insects, yet may be termed beneficial. The four members of the woodpecker family, the high-holder, red-headed, hairy and downy wood-peckers, are classed as beneficial, yet some are inclined to consider the damage done to fruit trees by their bills far greater than the good done by the insects eaten. The thrush is also a feeder upon the larvae of many of our injurious insects and on several occasions large quantities of these pests have been found in their stomachs. The chickadee, song sparrow, canary and grey bird are worthy of protection on account of their usefulness to agriculture.

The birds which are decidedly injurious are those that have been found to live upon beneficial insects, fruit or grain. In this class we have the common crows and blackbirds. Some persons look upon the crow as a neutral creature, paying for the fruit and grain it eats by devouring noxious insects. This is an

opinion founded upon sentiment rather than upon any fact, and the trouble Annapolis and Cornwallis farmers experience in keeping the corn from being destroyed is enough to justify their destruction. The robin has become outlawed. His attacks upon fruits, particularly cherries, earth worms, which are beneficial and to grain have changed his position among our rural songsters, and he is now hunted without fear of killing a useful friend. He is too intelligent to be frightened by the ordinary deceptions, in the form of scare crows and as our Bear River readers will testify can only be driven off the cherry trees by direct annihilation.

There is a bird, however, that should not be protected in any degree. It is one that has probably caused the farmers more trouble and money than any member of its tribe. We refer to the English sparrow. It is at present with us in small numbers, but if it multiplies with its usual rapidity, a few years will suffice to prove it a nuisance. In Ontario it destroys an immense quantity of grain in the fields and, as it builds in the barns, it damages it in the mow during winter. In cities it is an unmitigated pest, building its nest under the eaves, chattering before daylight, and besouling the cornices, windows and pavements into unsightliness. In the I. C. R. depot at St. John they have built and defy all attempts to remove them by poisoned grain or force. Their pugnacity drives the old resident native birds away and they take possession of the vacated quarters. The swallows seem unable to combat against them, and the majority of swallow-houses are now occupied by the piratical fellow and their beneficial legitimate rivals are left to build where they may.

Australia is greatly exercised over their ravages among the orchards and grain fields and large bounties are given for their destruction, the heads or eggs to be shown at exhibitions and for which prizes of from ten dollars to one will be offered for the largest collections.

In the face of this evidence it is important that these sparrows should be discouraged as much as possible now, as they have not as yet very seriously affected our crops owing to their small numbers. "At their usual rate of increase," says Dr. Merriam, an ornithologist, "a single pair if unhindered by death would in ten years increase to 275, 716, 983, 698 birds." This is based upon every egg producing a bird.