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THE INVASION OF THE ENGLISHER
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If our American birds governed the immigration laws of our land, they would close the season on the invasion of feathered inhabitants from foreign countries, even such as England and China.

The introduction of the English sparrow, or European house sparrow, in the United States bird-world has always been a problem for our native songsters. It is no negro problem of the South for them, where education is out of the question. Exportation is impossible. This foreign sparrow may be all right in some narrow-streeted city where other birds do not live, but he has no place along the tree-lined streets, gardens and parks. Our native songsters are superior in every way to the imported street ~~gambler~~^{IN}.

The English sparrow was introduced into America in 1850. In the fall of that year, eight pairs were brought to Buffalo, New York, and liberated there the following spring. Since that time, other importations were made, and small flocks of sparrows were carried from one locality to another. In the years that followed, no other bird has naturalized itself or spread to every section of the United States like this feathered tramp.

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of English sparrows in Portland. A pair was found at home

in 1888 in the ivy-covered porch of an old residence on Fourth near Oak Street. They had likely come in from the South, or they may have come over the usual freight car route. It is well-known that the spread of these birds was often due to the railroads. This medium has populated many communities. In cities where the English sparrows thrived, they were generally found about depots and warehouses. In winter the sparrow asked for no better home than an empty freight car, especially if the floor is covered with loose grain. When the doors of the freight cars are locked, the sparrows are shut in and carried off, tramp-like, to other places. By this civilized mode of travel, this bird was carried from point to point and was readily at home wherever it landed.

The rapid spread through the country is the result of the bird's hardiness. He has an aggressive disposition, takes to a diversity of food, and has almost complete immunity from natural enemies.

For years we had a bird house that was rented each summer by the bluebirds. One spring when they returned from the South, they found a pair of English sparrows in possession. The Englisher does not migrate, but is a winter resident wherever he lives and starts nesting early, before our native songsters arrive from the South. Even though the sparrows were pitched out of the bluebird residence, and the house

cleaned thoroughly, yet the bluebirds refused to lease it again.

The bluebird, white-breasted or violet-green swallow, and the Parkman wren are all common residents about our city, and each likes to take up a homestead in a good sheltered bird-box. From a naturalist's standpoint, property increases in value whenever one of these native songsters takes up a residence. On the other hand, real estate drops every time an English sparrow moves in, because no self-respecting feathered native can dwell in the same neighborhood.

No one can dispute the sparrow's success as a family man. He works overtime to people the earth. The stork of the sparrow species is a busy individual for almost half of every year. Then, in addition, the English sparrow has the advantage over the songsters that nest in the woods and fields, for they have so many natural enemies, such as hawks, owls, animals, and snakes. The Englisher lives about the crowded city, where he has little to fear, because men are unobserving and rarely interfere.

When it comes to housekeeping, I give the Englisher credit for wanting something new and up-to-date. He loves the crosspiece in the protected top of an electric arc lamp. There he gets free light and heat. For second choice, he takes a bird-box or protected nook about a building. If necessary, he takes to a tree, but he does not like this, for nest building in a tree is more difficult. If hard pushed,

he will even take a rain spout or a gutter along the eaves of the house. You can't "stump" a sparrow for a nesting site.

Down near the lower end of sparrow row some hornets built a nest up under the projecting eaves of the front porch of a cottage, just beside the bracket. I can understand how a pair of sparrows will fight for a bird-box and drive other birds away, but I never dreamed they would be envious of the hornets. But a sparrow must have a place to nest. Whether the hornets left voluntarily or with the aid of the sparrows I do not know, but the next time I passed I found the birds in possession--actually making a home in a hornet's nest. They had gone in through the bracket and pulled out a large part of the comb, and were replacing it with grass and feathers.

Think of raising a family of birds in a hornet's nest--not one, but several families! When the young sparrows grew older, I looked to see the bottom fall out and drop the nestful of little brats to the porch, but it didn't. The hornet's nest remained as strong as if it had been made for sparrows. And the sparrows liked it immensely; it was a novelty, and not another pair around had a home like theirs.

The cock-sparrow was proud of his home. He helped feed the children, but not because he liked it. I could see it was not in a cock-sparrow to nurse children. He liked fighting better, and between meals, even if he only had a moment to spare, he would spend it in fighting with the neighbors. He would drop down suddenly in the street in the midst

of a crowd of sparrows and pitch into the nearest by jerking at a tail or wing feather. For a moment the dust and feathers would fly, and the victor would sputter around with his wings drooping and his tail up. Then away he would go, fluttering off, foraging for fruit and bugs. He returned, dusty and dirty, every few minutes with morsels of food.

It is always a wonder to me that more of these street sparrows are not killed as they hop and flutter about the hoofs of the horses and in front of the cars. Half the time they seem to see how close they can miss getting hit, and off they flutter in sidelong flight, as if hardly able to rise. But the sparrow knows the ways of the city like a newsboy, and he is safer down amid the clatter of the wheels than his cousins are in the woods and fields.