

POULTRY.

Poultry on the Farm.

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An acquaintance of mine says he had plenty of fresh eggs one winter, anyway. Being too ill for other heavier work he tended the hens, giving them fine clover hay and hot boiled potatoes freely. I will add that in a mild winter the potato ration overdone would overfatten.

Following is my present programme, based on my main supplies, though I shall add some extras and treats:—First day—Meal pudding, oyster shells, wheat, barley, chopped raw vegetables. Second day—Vegetables, usually cooked, wheat, buckwheat, gravel, corn on cob. Third day—Meat, cooked, charcoal, oats, shelled corn, clover hay.

Then return to the beginning and repeat. Shells and gravel, the grinders, are put with puddings and vegetables, which need their help. Meat is a digester itself, but being laxative is paired with constipating charcoal, oats and hay. Corn, the most heating and fattening grain, is paired with oats, the least so. One warm, cooked meal is planned for each day, likewise one article slowly eaten furnishing long employment, such as clover, corn on cob and raw vegetables. I lately read of a man who, having neither hay cutter nor fine hay, took an old-fashioned flail to his clover, and thus separated the edible leaves from the useless and cumbersome stems. Clover chaff is relished, scalded as an ingredient of puddings, or dry and clear. I have learned the so-called "germ meal," sold among poultry supplies, is corn, oats, barley and wheat ground together—an admirable combination indeed. I am using the first three ingredients, with which I put shorts, and if bran or ground rye were at hand, should also add some of either or both, because I try to vary puddings like other parts of the diet. Among the sunflowers, an agreeable and valuable feature of my autumn programme, was one American head, ten inches in diameter, and several nearly as large. On comparing notes with other poulterers I often find them feeding a greater quantity, though less variety, but I intend to provide whatever the hens can eat up clean. Whoever expects to get eggs or anything else out of comparatively nothing will, instead, get nothing out of something, since ill-fed hens make no return for even that which they have eaten. In order that my biddies should not inaugurate an "early closing" movement for their laying days, nor the absence of eggs be another kind of autumn leaves, I fed carefully through late summer and the fall, when grass dried and bugs hid. Besides its own appropriate work, each season should see some planning done for the next.

While I write, I am thinking that

"As sure as we're a poet,
We'll be out before we know it,
With a big, long-handled shovel,
Digging ditches in the snow."

Doubtless some Northwestern agriculturists failed to visit Chicago this season, because their wheat did not bring a fair price. But whatever the price, market reports look as though farmers had full crops, and their fowls might have such too. Instead of exporting wheat and importing eggs, thus paying carriage both ways, feed part of the surplus to poultry here. The poultryman is not seeing "hard times;" it was some other man who said "Not only are dollars scarce, but worse yet, half dollars." For several months poultry products have commanded excellent prices, while poultry supplies remain unusually cheap. I cannot even meet the desires of those who come right to the house and tease for eggs.

Certainly the beginner should keep accounts, and no veteran is harmed thereby. Write the number of eggs gathered each day, also dates and amounts of both sales and expenses, and have on record the number of your fowls, with age and description of each; then, once in a while, or perhaps oftener, seriously sit down and "take account of stock," learning whether and what you are making. Our labors must be wisely directed, as well as earnest and abundant. I sometimes wonder how people make up their averages of egg production. One person, giving me his, said that was what his flock would have averaged, had each hen done her duty. I make monthly averages, then add those monthly ones for the year, deducting nothing for setters or mothers, because other hens, not allowed to set, will still take some "time off" for rest and recuperation. If a week after any month begins I sell four hens, they are considered equal to one hen for the whole month, or six sold midway equal to three throughout. The larger the divisor or number of hens, the smaller average our sum total of eggs will yield. I wonder whether some champion averagers divide by the number of fowls left at end of year after reductions through selling and eating, and yet use as dividend a sum total of eggs, including what were laid by those defunct biddies. Burnham's "Poultry Book" calls 140 eggs a piece a year a good average for large flocks. Small flocks do better, because they get in proportion more insects and table-scraps. "Fannie Field" admits that 125 eggs to a hen show good work, but thinks we should aim at 180, which is the maximum.

Poultry well managed will help or entirely support their owner, but cannot do so and carry along a lot of idlers among themselves. Give the best in your flock other beets than "dead beat"

companions. Market or cook the culls, and your remaining birds will profit by increased room. If one enjoys a fine looking flock he will discover how much its appearance is improved by the absence of imperfect specimens. Prices are often best, and, till chickens come again, continue good after the holidays—that season when so many rush in poultry they are apt to glut the market. The recommender of culling should also state that it is wrong to sell a diseased bird. In fact, no sickly fowls should wait around to be sold, because they lead miserable lives, cost time and medicine, and spread disease among their own and human kind. I am sometimes asked whether I ever have sick birds. Yes, but I have learned to get them planted deep in mother earth, where they will produce better crops than when alive. The wife of a purveyor, and later a hotel proprietor, told me they rarely got a lot of hens without some diseased ones, and she had seen so many tumors and unhealthy conditions, she could not relish poultry unless bought of reliable persons.

Keep Only Paying Hens.

When an account is kept with a flock of hens, the mistake often made is in keeping the account of the whole number, instead of individual hens. It is more difficult to keep account of each member separately. The egg in a nest cannot always be credited to the right depositor. The owner cannot stand by the nest in order to learn which of the hens lays the largest number of eggs.

But each hen will soon make known her faults and vices, even if her good qualities cannot be discovered. When she lays an egg she makes a noise about it, and her comb looks bright and red during her busy season. When she is adding nothing to the egg basket, she sings no song, her comb shrivels and becomes pale. She quietly becomes a back number. Each hen indicates when she is a producer. The farmer or poultryman can select the profitable from those that consume food without rendering an equivalent.

Every flock contains a few hens that are superior to the others. The flock, as such, may not pay for its support, yet it may have in it one or two hens that cannot be surpassed as layers. But the few productive hens may have imposed upon them the task of supporting all the idlers; as the eggs gathered are from the whole number of hens, the idlers soon disgust their owners, who send the whole flock to the market as unprofitable.

If the most prolific hens were retained, and the worthless ones marketed, a great improvement would soon result. It is keeping drones that makes expenses large and receipts small. It is a loss of time and money to feed ten hens in order to secure eggs from only five. A small flock of laying hens is more valuable than a large flock that is "expected" to begin laying. Don't depend on uncertainties. The hens that are not laying during those periods of the year when all the conditions for so doing are in their favor will give but little profit when the conditions are against them.

Keeping a flock of hens on the probability that they are "about" to lay is a great risk. The most deceiving hens in that respect are those that are in a very healthy and thrifty condition, but are too fat. On the principle that "food makes eggs," this class of hens are fed liberally, and while their appetites will satisfy the most sanguine owner, the bottom of the egg basket is never covered. Finally, as time flies on, and the season is well advanced, a little reflection points to the fact that such hens cannot now pay for past favors; even should they begin laying, the accounts place them on the wrong side of the balance sheet. And now, when the hens begin to lay, having been highly fed, the moulting stage comes on, and three months more is taken up by the shedding of their old feathers, and the putting on of a new suit—all at their owner's expense.

There is a wide difference in hens. Some will begin laying in the fall, lay on through the winter and during the summer, losing no time until August or September, when they begin to moult. But moulting is fatal to such hens, as they receive no credit for their good works. If they set an example of usefulness they lead their owners to expect them to so continue, and as soon as they fail to keep on, their heads fall under the hatchet for simply resting from their labors, while the fat, drone hens that have been expected to begin are retained another year in hope that they will do better. Virtue does not receive its reward even among hens. Individual merit is swallowed up in the vices of the whole number.

Early pullets are the most uncertain of all. A pullet that does not begin to lay before she is ten months old should be sent to the market stall. It does not pay to keep pullets to replace hens unless the pullets begin to lay in December, and then lay during the winter. When the pullet is slow in beginning to lay, the cost of her maintenance detracts from the profits too greatly. When early pullets (those hatched not later than April) do not begin to lay in November, it is seldom that they will lay until the opening of the spring.

It is much cheaper to keep the old hens during the three months required for the moulting process, than to sell them off and replace them with such early pullets. The old hens will cost less and pay better. No early pullet will pay for herself until she is at least eighteen months old, as she must return the cost from the time she was hatched

until the time she begins laying—a tribute which the hen has already paid.

The males are another set of drones. The time to dispose of them is when they weigh about three pounds each, as they then bring the highest prices. To retain them until they fully mature is to reduce the price and increase the cost. When keeping an account of a flock as a whole, the useful hens are charged with the support of these unprofitable lords of the poultry yards. They yield to them their choicest seats on the roost, and are crowded by them on the poultry house floor and in the yards. Every flock should be reduced to its minimum, containing not a single drone, male or female. Each hen, when possible, should be carefully observed, in order to know which to retain and which to discard. This is the only intelligent way to manage to procure a profit and avoid loss.

By weeding out the unprofitable stock a higher standard will result. In the observation of the individuals much can be learned. The good hens become pets, and pride in their individual excellence results on the part of the owner. The young stock will be hatched only from the best producers, instead of from eggs taken indiscriminately from the egg basket. No farmer who will carefully cull out the drones need depend on breeders to produce breeds for him. Pure breeds should be used, however, especially pure-bred males. Even with the choicest stock the matter of selection should not be overlooked. There are drones and idlers in aristocratic flocks as well as in flocks of low degree. There is room for improvement in every direction. J. J. L.

APIARY.

Mr. Ferguson's Rejoinder.

Heretofore I have always been interested, and often instructed, by what Mr. Pringle had to say upon beekeeping, but I must say that in this little controversy, Mr. Pringle's articles have been more conspicuous for hauteur and proofless assertion than for correct reasoning or sound argument. I think I have given a reason for every statement I have made, which Mr. Pringle does not condescend to do, evidently assuming that his *ipse dixit* should be all sufficient.

In the ADVOCATE of November 1st Mr. P. accuses me of perverting his statements in order to make him appear to contradict himself. I would remind Mr. Pringle that in his article, July 15th, he accused me of contradicting myself, and has never yet shown me wherein. He speaks of obtuseness, but there are none so blind as those who will not see. If Mr. Pringle cannot see that he has contradicted himself, perhaps his readers will not be so wilfully blind, and for their sakes and my own I now propose still more plainly to show wherein I consider I was justified in saying that Mr. Pringle contradicted himself. In his first article on this subject, in issue of May 15th, Mr. P. tells "Subscriber" that "it would certainly be a little difficult to get extracted honey from box hives. You might get strained honey in the manner described in a previous issue of the ADVOCATE." (Why strained honey and not extracted, since Mr. P. tells "Subscriber" subsequently that he can perform this operation readily?) Mr. P. goes on to say: "You want extracted honey, taken with a honey extractor. This machine can only be used on hives with movable frames. You must, therefore, transfer your bees from the old box hives to movable frame hives before you can use a honey extractor on them." Further on in this same article, in giving directions for transferring, he says: "If you have a honey extractor the honey had better be extracted from the combs before you fasten them in the frames or afterwards, as you may find it easier." The reader will notice that above Mr. Pringle says that "Subscriber" could not get, without difficulty, extracted honey from loose comb, here he advises him to do this very thing; and in his second article, July 15th, he speaks very lightly of this operation (extracting from loose comb), mentioning it incidentally in connection with transferring, as though it were the simplest thing in the world, saying: "I advised the box hive man to let his bees swarm as usual, putting the swarm in the new movable frame hives, and in twenty-one or twenty-two days from the first swarm, when the combs would be entirely free from brood, to transfer comb and bees to the new hives, and by extracting the honey from the combs he would have no difficulty;" and again, "But in twenty-one days after the first swarm, when the combs are entirely free from brood, the honey may be extracted readily. I think the reader will see something like a contradiction here."

As for fools, I would say to Mr. Pringle that the readers of the ADVOCATE are quite capable of judging for themselves as to the wisdom or folly of following either his advice or mine. And what I have written will speak for itself.

G. W. FERGUSON.