

POULTRY.

Fancy Poultry on the Farm.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

If you have "no use for chickens," or a discontented son, you had better read this article over twice, for something pleasant and profitable has come into my life and I wish to pass it on. The farm I live on consists of one acre, with access to free range for my birds. I have at present, this second week of September, seventeen hens. They were laying profitably in December, January, February and to this date have kept it up. Half of them are moulting now, and I expect no more eggs for two months. Those selected for breeding will be kept, the balance sold at once. Yesterday I sold the day's eggs, one dozen, for thirty-five cents. The man who farms the sixty acres next to me has some seventy fowl. His daily egg harvest is eight or nine, if he finds them. His is the typical farm flock. I have him started on the right road now, and here I am after you others.

I shall give you a short history of the events leading up to my opening remarks. Four years ago I came from the city to enter a business which, owing to natural facilities, is carried on in the country. After work is cleared up for the day there are a few hours when all outdoors is pleading for attention. There was a small flock of nondescript fowl about, and I found myself watching them with increasing interest. At that time I did not know a Barred Rock from a Leghorn. For the first season I had a great deal of pleasure in setting a few hens and watching anxiously the miracle of incubation. Then the chirping little balls of down that trotted about in the grass completely won my heart, and I resolved to find out all I could about chickens in order that my pets should have every chance in life. As they feathered out I noticed that they lost the delightful look of solid equality that characterized them as chicks. Some grew very long and slim, others dwarfed and dumpy. A few died for no sensible reason at all. That fall I bought ten Barred Rock pullets from a farmer. They looked pretty much alike as to size and feathering. These, with the best of my own, I wintered, but with the best of feed and care I did not get an egg until the natural laying season came around. About mid-winter I picked up a poultry paper in the bookstore. The cover page was adorned with the cut of a cockerel weighing fourteen pounds, a first-prize winner at the Ontario Provincial Winter Fair, Guelph. This opened my eyes very wide indeed. Such birds I had never dreamed of. Now I began to dream of ostriches strutting about in my yards. I wrote at once to the man who owned this bird, and when his descriptive matter arrived I became at once an amateur fancier. The birds happened to be Blue Orpingtons. Had they been any one of a dozen other varieties of Standard Fowl it would not have mattered. The man wanted fifteen dollars for a setting of eggs, and much to the scornful amusement of my neighbor, I ordered some.

Spring came and with it the fancy eggs. I set them carefully, for I had been reading poultry books all winter and knew a little theory, which is a good thing if taken in the right doses. Eight chicks hatched, which I considered good, for the eggs had travelled four hundred miles in early March. On reporting the result I was sent nine eggs free, and from these I hatched six chicks. At the same time I was hatching the eggs from my scrub birds. The difference in the tiny chicks was apparent even to my amateur eyes. The pure-breds had broad heads, large, bright eyes and very sturdy legs, set well apart, and commenced growing with a hop, skip and jump. In three months' time they were twice the size of the mongrel birds, and my delight and wonder knew no bounds. At four months my biggest cockerel weighed seven and one half pounds, and my joy was not dampened by the fact that no one in town would believe it. My neighbor came over one day, had a look, grunted noncommittally and went home. "This fancy stuff is just a fad, you wait and see," was the total of his opinion. Meanwhile, I studied all I could about my own particular breed, bought a Standard of Perfection, and when the Winter Fair came due I bought a ticket for my first poultry show, and took with me a cockerel and three pullets I had picked out as my best.

Compared with the flocks I was used to in my district my birds had loomed like giants, but when I had wandered about the long aisles in the poultry section I realized that many hundreds of other fellows were raising fine birds, and I waited for the judging to begin with a properly growing anxiety, not unmixed with humility. I was competing with seven other cockerels and eleven pullets. Finally the judge came to our class and started work. I never took my eyes off him for an instant. As he handled and compared the birds my excitement grew. As he finished examining the cockerels I saw his pencil make a figure "one" on my tag, and his assistant place a red, first-prize badge on it. In the next twenty minutes I had won first and second prize on pullets, and was experiencing such pleasure as I had never known could exist. I cannot explain it, but I have seen strong men, years old in the fancy, grow red with pure joy at a similar victory. The remaining days of the fair I spent talking with judges and fanciers, and discovered just what proportions of luck and good management had contributed to my success. I was assured that it was extremely rare

to get such good specimens from a single setting of eggs, and I have since discovered that to be true. The birds had been hatched in May, had just the right feed and enough of it to keep them growing naturally, and they arrived at the show at just the right stage and in the pink of condition. I learned more in those few days than I could have by a year's reading, but without the reading I would not have been in a position to assimilate all the information that came my way, nor to ask the questions that brought out the facts I was looking for.

By this time I had a real poultry house to winter my birds, thirty-five feet long, shed roof, nine feet high in front and six at back. The front faced south. Three feet from the floor, and the entire length, were alternate cotton and glass windows. The glass windows were fixed and the cotton frames swung back and hooked on the ceiling. There was a foot of straw on the double-boarded floor. The roosts were set on little cast-iron cups filled with oil, that absolutely prevented mites from getting on the birds at night. A dust box, grit and shell hoppers, a mash trough, a water fountain hung high enough to escape scratched-up litter, a spike to impale mangels and cabbages on, cotton drop curtains over the roosts (these are only lowered on the coldest nights) low, roomy nests completed the furnishings. By the time snow lay knee deep outside I heard daily that sweetest of music, the cackling of pullets in December. I had by this time bought a number of hens from the parent flock of my winners, and all through the winter they yielded a fifty per cent. lay, at an average price of fifty cents a dozen. I have done better than that since and hope to continue. At this same time, on the farm next door, were some ninety hens and pullets not giving a one per cent. yield. My neighbor, not caring to hatch his birds, had gone out in the fall and rounded up what he called a nice flock, paying sixty cents each for them. If his sole idea had been to make a living patchwork quilt he made a howling success of it. He had every size, color and disposition, but not one real business bird in the lot. These were installed in the first real poultry house the farm had ever had. He had made a fair copy of ours. He supplied grit and shell, gave the birds green feed and meat, but until the price of eggs had dropped to thirty cents in early March he was losing money every day, and with that flock he never got it back. Cleaning dropping boards, preventing vermin, was too much bother. Putting in fresh, deep litter, cleaning water pans, and feeding regularly and well was "fussing" with them. Yet he thought he was doing a great deal, and his disappointment at the result was proportional. His case, as I have watched it daily for several years, is the best illustration I have seen of the maxim that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well, or not at all.

It has been no case of plain sailing with me. I had been warned that my second season would not be as good as the first, for the reason that my enthusiasm, cooling slightly, would allow me to neglect many of the details in feeding and care that had meant so much the previous year. I laughed at this during the first show, but the following spring I was lucky enough to catch myself in the act of saying: "Oh! I guess that will be all right," when I knew that it was not all right, but needed a little trouble at an inconvenient moment to make it so. Just a little slipshoddy work is enough to set you back from "first money." I have not the space here to go into the details of the work. There are many fine books to tell you what the details are, but only experience will make you attend faithfully to those same details.

My flock, for which everything had to be bought, paid a profit of over two dollars a head for the year. This was very fair pay for the spare time work I enjoyed so much. My neighbor, who raised most of the feed himself, ran his birds at a loss. He has a nice flock of standard-bred White Wyandottes now, and the change in results has started the seeds of genuine interest in his breast, without which no human endeavor is worth the whistle. Remember, the best of pure-bred birds would have failed with him had he continued his system. But when once he had bought a few good birds and paid what he considered a very stiff price for them, he just naturally began to do all he could for them. And they naturally did all they could for him, and so both parties were satisfied. During the last three years I have inspected many farm flocks, and the conditions under which they are kept, and I feel that I have something worth while to say on the matter.

Last fall I sold a trio of Indian Runner ducks to a farmer who was born and raised on a farm. In February he wrote me that they had died. I met him in town soon after and found that they had been fed on nothing but whole corn all winter, had no grit, no green stuff, and yet this man could not understand what was the matter with them. Incidentally, he had never known what it was to have fresh eggs on his farm in December. These two cases are extreme, I think, but I do not believe the average is far above that. Poultry has a place on the farm that is as important as any other, for its size, but it is the last to be given a serious thought. The average farm flock is left to shift for itself, and consequently the fittest survive, and hardiness the only quality left, as the conditions are such as to produce nothing else. If I were not convinced that there is nothing more simple than to start right with poultry I would not be writing these lines.

As it is well known that birds of one type and size do best together, it is of prime importance to decide

on a breed. Start by trying out a purely egg breed, like the Leghorns, together with a meat and egg breed such as Rocks, Wyandottes or Orpingtons. There is a splendid assortment of colors in these breeds to choose from, and all varieties have their boosters who are breeding them along standard lines and constantly producing better stock. After you have tried out the two breeds fix on the one that best suits your climate, locality and market. Without wishing to boost any breed, it is my honest opinion that one of the American or English "meat and egg" breeds is best suited to Canada, as a whole. The International Egg Laying Competitions have shown that they lead in winter-egg production.

This brings me to the kernel of my subject. Why do I advise fancy poultry, and not just good standard-bred birds, that might not take prizes at a show? This is why. Fanciers are men who love their birds. They study them constantly, individually. They visit shows every winter and are always comparing notes with their fancier friends. In order to win prizes at the big shows it is necessary to produce birds that are well set up, vigorous and shapely. This can only be done by intelligently selecting the breeders and resolutely casting out the balance from the breeding pens. And you will find that at this time the fancier is not thinking solely of fine feathers. He has the future of his flock at heart. It takes a considerable amount of experience and study to know these best birds. It is necessary to have had an intimate acquaintance with their ancestors for several generations, the more the better. Fine feathers, contrary to general opinion, are not the essentials in the show-room. Condition and type are the first considerations, and these are not produced by birds that are merely pretty to look at. The virtues of a breeder and a good show bird lie considerably more than feather deep. I know that once a man has made up his mind to get pure-bred stock of any kind and gives it a fair trial he would never dream of going back to the old, hit-and-miss, scrub stuff. Aside from the personal satisfaction that he is using his brains and hands and land in producing the best possible results, he finds added satisfaction on the credit side of his bank book. It is a strange fact that, however a man likes to prosper, unless he finds his work interesting he is not going to give it that attention that is a vital necessity. I have lived for many years in the city, and I know that there are more city people envying a life in the country than vice versa. Since I have been attending shows I have met many farm lads who are happily living in the country. They have a hobby that is broadening them by taking them at regular intervals among men they soon make friends with. And it is these very farm boys who have the best chance to shine in the show-room. The start is not expensive, and given the right care there is no place where the finest stock can be raised but on the farm. Fanciers always manage to have their birds raised on free range, putting them in winter quarters in the fall. And, where it is easy to raise three hundred or four hundred birds, the chances for picking out a winner are so much greater.

Can you not see your boy watching his flock during the winter, choosing his best birds to form a select little breeding pen and studying their habits with the greatest interest? And when he takes the best of care of his growing chicks, that the other fellow does not get ahead of him next fall, he ensures a splendid profit on the flock on a purely utility basis. He reads the announcement of the fall fairs and then looks over the chickens to see if there is more than one cockerel or pullet that has a chance to win. Can you not imagine his joy at pulling down a coveted prize, or his grim determination to go back and raise a bird that will knock the spots off anything his rival can show next year? You see, it is only necessary to have a little real interest on the farm to make the life there the most delightful in the world. The happy man always has a little jam on the bread and butter of his life. A book called, "Adventures in Contentment," by David Grayson, explains very clearly what I mean. It will help you, as it did me, to look on the farm with the eyes of a man who has drudged in the city and sweated on the land. Surely the ditch diggers of this world are those who had never taken an interest in their work, and it slipped away, leaving them nothing at the end of this life but a memory of aching muscles. No man on earth can understand the sprouting of a grain or the quickening of an egg. There is sufficient marvel in all growing things to make a life-time of delightful study.

And then it is not hard to understand some of Nature's processes sufficiently to hasten and mold her works "closer to the heart's desire." If many men had not had a mighty interesting time experimenting in Dame Nature's workshop we would all be gathering our sustenance with a club even now. Yes, and even now we are as little children reaching for the second step. The vast store of natural energy on this globe is as yet scarcely tapped at all. And yet we often have the spectacle of strong men starving for work in the cities and crops rotting for the lack of hands to gather them. These things are known to all observing men, and, be the reasons what they may, a kindly, democratic government, such as we have in this country, can do no more than show the way. The terrific waste and mismanagement in the production of domestic needs, so glaring in this country and the United States, is unknown in Germany. But who wants to live in Germany? No one likes to be forced to do the right thing. It is better to