

POULTRY.

"Poultry on the Farm."

BY D. F. WILSON, DAUPHIN.

As a rule, farmers take but little interest in their poultry; in fact, many of them look upon this branch of farm stock as something that does not pay, but at the same time they do not get rid of the hens, considering them a sort of necessary evil which must be kept because their wives are interested in them. There are others, however, who recognize the advantages and profits which they realize from their poultry in the shape of plenty of fresh eggs for home consumption—a luxury by no means to be despised—and also the cash returns for eggs and dressed poultry.

There are numerous books published on the breeding and management of poultry, and, also, articles appear continually in the agricultural and other papers. These are, however, generally from the pens of poultry fanciers, and while there are many valuable lessons to be learnt from them, the farmer has one great advantage over the ordinary fancier, and that is plenty of room. The poultry fancier generally lives in town and has his birds confined to small yards, where they require lots of care to keep them in health, and also to be supplied with changes of food and other things which they find for themselves on the farm; their owners, in looking after the wants of their pets, finding recreation and pleasure. The farmer, on the other hand, while he may be a fancier, would always like to make the work required for attending to the poultry as light as possible, and this advantage of plenty of run will help him in this respect. We will therefore consider the subject from the standpoint of the least possible work for the largest possible profits.

The first thing necessary is a suitable building, and in this severe climate the great object to be aimed at is warmth. To get this, in Manitoba and the Northwest, a dugout in the side of a hill will be most suitable, with a thick sod and earth roof, or a building may be put up on the level and made very comfortable. Much will depend on the location and the material which the farmer can most readily obtain. In any case a good sod roof is comfortable. If it is a dugout it should be logged or boarded up inside, so that it can be whitewashed. This is necessary for cleanliness and also to make it light and cheerful. This is with a view to eggs in winter, for if hens do not lay during winter they do not pay. There should be a good-sized window facing the south and coming down to within a foot of the floor; opposite it a space should be enclosed by a ten or twelve inch board, a few feet square, in which to keep plenty of dust; in it the hens will enjoy themselves, for, even in very cold weather, when the sun shines there will be considerable heat from the window. The largest portion of the hen-house should be divided from the rest by a low partition, fifteen to eighteen inches high. This space should be covered by about a foot of straw and most of the feed given scattered in it. This scratching-ground and dust bath will do more towards winter eggs than anything else that can be done for hens. The rest of the space in the building can be fitted with roosts and a box or two to hold gravel and ground bone, which can be made by burning bones and then breaking them fine with a hammer. The roosts should all be the same height and not more than two or two and a half feet from the floor; and they are best made movable, for convenience in cleaning out. A cabbage, turnip or beet hung from the roof by a string will also give the hens something to do and supply the necessary green food. A piece of meat hung in the same way will also be beneficial. Water should be supplied in something which the hens can only get their heads into, otherwise they will foul it. A long, narrow trough for warm feed will also be useful.

Nest-boxes can be fastened along the wall, and there should be plenty of them. I have said nothing about the size of the building—that will depend on the number of birds kept—but in no case should they be overcrowded.

In feeding for eggs in winter, care must be taken to prevent the hens getting too fat. If once a hen gets fat she lays no eggs till spring, and some breeds are much more prone to this than others. This is why the bulk of the feed should be scratched for in the straw, which makes them work for their living and keeps them in health. A hot feed is very good in the morning, in the shape of scalded bran and shorts or chop stuff or boiled grain, of which fowls are especially fond, but it should be given sparingly, not nearly as much as they will eat, for if they get all they want of it they are inclined to sit on the roost and lay on fat; but if not given too much it warms them and makes them feel like scratching for more. A variety of grains should be given, though wheat is the best all-round food. Wheat screenings are very good, the weed seeds making variety, and once these get into a hen's crop they will never grow again. Oats ought to form a large percentage of the feed until the hens begin to lay, as they are not so inclined to fatten. After a hen begins to lay there is no danger of her getting too fat.

In summer, hens on the farm want no care except a good supply of grain. Everything else that they require they will find for themselves.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



THE THIEF ON THE SHIP.

"Mrs. Melhurst's compliments, sir, and would you please come down to her stateroom immediately?" I had just shut myself into my little office on deck, having run through the ship's accounts before turning in that night. It is quite a mistake, by the way, to think that we pursers have no more onerous duties to perform when at sea than to watch over the passengers' comfort, read papers on Sunday, and keep a store of nautical information at our finger-tips for the benefit of every curious voyager. Nowadays the purser of a great American liner—making, perhaps, a record for the passage of six days—has his work pretty well out for him during the entire voyage.

On the present occasion I had scarcely got my accounts fairly in hand when I was interrupted by a slight tap at the door. I arose at once and opened it, and there stood Mrs. Melhurst's Canadian maid, with flushed face and nervous, agitated manner.

"Is there anything wrong?" I asked, with some surprise, when she had delivered her message.

"There is, sir," she replied hastily. "All I know."

She was about to make some other statement, but pulled herself up suddenly and tripped along the deck without another word.

I switched off the electric light, locked the door, and hurried away after her. When I got to Mrs. Melhurst's stateroom I saw at once that something had occurred to cause her serious anxiety. The berths, the couch, and even the floors were littered with the contents of cabin trunks and handbags. In the midst of the confusion stood the lady herself, looking decidedly perplexed and annoyed.

"This is very singular, Mr. Morse," she said, pointing to an empty jewel-case which lay open on the upper berth. "My diamond ornaments are missing."

"You don't say so!" I exclaimed in sheer astonishment. "I do say so," she replied sharply. "You can see for yourself that they are gone."

"How did it happen?" I asked.

"I cannot possibly tell you. At dinner this evening I happened to mention to Mrs. Lathimer that I had picked up a certain crescent-shaped brooch on the Continent. She expressed a wish to see it. When the tables were cleared I came in here, took out the brooch and left the jewel-case lying on the berth, but when I got back the case was empty."

"How long were you absent?"

"Not more than half an hour."

I was totally staggered. I examined the look carefully, but there was absolutely nothing to show that it had been tampered with. I could hit upon no better conclusion than that Mrs. Melhurst might possibly have mislaid the jewel somewhere. This had the sole effect of exasperating the lady to such a degree—for it seems that she had already searched every nook and corner in the cabin—that I was glad to beat a retreat in order to lay the matter before the captain.

I had just got to the head of the saloon stairs when I heard some one bounding up after me, three or four steps at a time. I turned and saw Mr. Carter, who, by the way, had made several voyages with us on several occasions.

"I say, Mr. Morse," he said, taking me confidentially by the arm, "you've got some queer customers on board this trip."

"How so?"

"Why, someone's gone and walked off with my silver cigarette-case, a couple of rings, and a pair of gold."

"The devil!"

"Well, it looks uncommonly like as if the individual you refer to had a hand in the business, for I don't see how any ordinary mortal could get into one's cabin, with the door bolted on the inside, unless he managed to squeeze through the porthole."

"On my word, things were beginning to look serious, and no mistake! I lost no time in hunting up the captain and made him acquainted with the state of affairs. He was just as much puzzled as I was myself. The first thing next morning he sent a message to Mrs. Melhurst, requesting a private interview in his cabin on deck. He also signified his wish that I should be present. We both questioned the lady closely, but her replies did not tend to throw any light upon the singular occurrence."

Nevertheless, we determined to keep a close watch on the staterooms in future. It was pretty evident we had a "black sheep" on board—probably an old hand at the business. For the next few days we had no further complaints. The thief was evidently "lying low," waiting until tranquillity was restored before making a fresh attempt. Meanwhile I kept my eyes open. I observed the little peculiarities of the different passengers and took particular note of the manner in which they occupied their time.

On board ship when you find a man who shows a marked preference for life above that of the loungers on deck or habits of the smokers on the promenade, you are inclined to the conclusion that he has some solid reasons for his exclusiveness. If, in addition to this, he happens to be of an uncommunicative disposition, with black hair and swarthy complexion, given to wearing a slouch hat and long coat—rightly or wrongly, you put him down as a decidedly suspicious character.

Now, we happened to have a passenger on board—a Brazilian named De Castro—who tallied in every way with this description. But for the fact that I had conclusive evidence to show he could not have been directly concerned in the robberies—for enquiries proved he had remained on deck the whole evening—he certainly would have been treated to a private interview in the captain's cabin. As it was, I was forced to conclude that black hair, swarthy complexion, slouch hat, and cloak were quite compatible with a man's innocence.

Nothing further occurred to excite suspicion until the last day or two of the voyage. Then, one evening after dinner, word was brought to me that three other staterooms had been rifled in the same mysterious manner. Watches, jewelry, and even money had appeared, though in all three cases the passengers stoutly declared they had left their doors locked.

When the alarm reached me I happened to be standing in my deck office. I had in my hand 20 sovereigns, which I had just taken in exchange for American money to accommodate one of our passengers. I didn't wait to lock up the gold; I simply placed it on my desk, switched off the light and hurried away. I had no fear for the safety of the sovereigns, my door having a particularly intricate lock, in which I took good care to turn the key before leaving.

I remained below for an hour or so, investigating these fresh complaints, but, as in the other cases, I was utterly unable to make head or tail of them. Vexed and bewildered, I went back to my office, unlocked the door, turned on the light, and mechanically stretched out my hand to take the sovereigns from the desk. My hand closed upon nothing more solid than thin air—my little pile of gold had vanished!

For a moment or two I stood there gazing blankly before me, so utterly confused and dismayed that I could scarcely bring my wits to bear upon the mysterious affair. Then I managed to pull myself together, and took a look around my

little cabin. In the course of my observations my eye happened to rest upon the porthole, which stood wide open, the weather being oppressively hot.

I regarded the innocent-looking porthole with the air of a veritable Sherlock Holmes. I went outside and thrust my arm in through the opening, but my hand did not reach within fully two yards of the desk. Still it struck me as being the only way by which the thief could have got at the money, and I determined to put my theory to a practical test.

I hurried down into the saloon, where most of the passengers were congregated. As yet few of them were aware of the robberies, for we had kept the matter as secret as possible. I went straight up to a young American gentleman who I knew had a great many trinkets in his stateroom, and was rather careless, too, in the way he left them lying about.

"Don't show any surprise," I whispered, glancing around at the other occupants of the saloon, "but might I ask whether your stateroom is locked?"

"It is."

"Well, just pass me your key; I want to try a little experiment. Wait till I'm gone and then stroll up on deck. Let yourself be seen—on the lower deck particularly—but don't pay too close attention to any one you may notice loitering there."

I went and shut myself in the stateroom, crouching down so that I could just keep an eye on the porthole over the top of the lower berth. I remained in that cramped position until my limbs fairly ached, and I was half inclined to give it up as a bad job.

But suddenly, as I glanced up at the porthole, my blood ran cold, and in all my life I never had such difficulty to keep down a yell. In the dim light I saw a long, thin, hairy arm thrust in through the opening. The next moment a small black hand had fastened upon a leather case lying close to the window and withdrew it as quick as thought, almost.

I sprang to my feet and bolted outside into the passage. There, just about the spot where I judged the stateroom to be situated, I came face to face with the Brazilian, De Castro. In spite of the heat he was wearing his long cloak, with the deep cape, and had his eternal cigarette between his teeth. He looked at me with an air of frank surprise, and I looked at him with an air of profound suspicion.

Suddenly a happy thought flashed through my mind. I turned round and sprang down the saloon stairs, running full tilt against the chief steward, who was standing at the bottom.

"Get me a handful of nuts—quick!" I cried.

When he brought them I hurried back on deck. The Brazilian had moved away a little toward the stern. I went close up, stood right in front of him, and then began deliberately to crack the nuts open, and then began deliberately to greedily upon me.

It was enough. My suspicions were confirmed. I flung the rest of the nuts into the sea, and walking straight up to De Castro, said:

"I must ask you to accompany me to the captain's cabin."

"You mean?" he asked, drawing back.

I was determined to stand no nonsense, and straightaway took him by the shoulders. The moment I had my hands upon him I heard a vicious snarl under his cape; it was pulled suddenly aside and out flew a monkey.

The little brute went at me, tooth and nail. I saw the gleam of a knife, too, in the Brazilian's hand, and I let him have my fist straight between the eyes before he could use it, and he measured his length upon the deck.

The quartermaster came running up, and the racial was dragged off to the captain's cabin. When searched there, Mrs. Melhurst's diamonds, Mr. Carter's cigarette-case and rings, and a miscellaneous collection of other valuables were found upon him. In his stateroom we discovered a perforated box, apparently intended for the use of the monkey, who was evidently quite as accomplished as his master.—*Cassell's Journal.*

MINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT.

MY DEAR NIECES,—

I think I cannot do better than begin this letter with a description of that little private literary club which I mentioned last month. Our plan was very simple. We elected a president and a vice-president, in order, of course, to merit the title of a real "society" or "club"; the rest were just members. We took up some subject for a certain time, such as history, geography, biography, etc., etc., and read up all we could upon that subject, writing down all the information obtained, in the exercise-books with which we all provided ourselves, and at each meeting reading the results of our researches. By this means a great deal of information was gathered in. Then each member was expected to bring two questions upon any subject, either to be answered on the spot (were any able to do so), or the answers to be looked up and brought to the next meeting. Many most amusing questions came up in this way, such as origin of words and customs, proverbs, old sayings and laws; in fact, the list is endless. I sometimes come across one of these exercise-books, and am surprised to see the wonderful number of interesting questions which were given and answered. Another very pleasing feature of our "club" was that at each meeting one of the members (selected by the president) read some interesting article, generally from one of the leading monthly magazines. Speaking of magazines—What a feast, at small cost, we can now obtain of these delightful aids to mind culture! In my last letter I spoke of the wonderful improvements in child-literature. Well, these improvements extend, nowadays, over all literature. It is almost impossible to realize that the beautiful magazines we see—pictures, type, and reading matter of uniform excellence—are ten cents a number or one dollar a year; aye, even five cents a number or fifty cents a year (as is the case with several)! As I said last month, people have really no excuse for remaining uncultured—for culture is literally thrust before them. One more word about our literary club. We ended our season with quite a grand exam. For this, we allowed our husbands and brothers (etc.!) to take a part as joint examiners. Each member reviewed the whole season's work; that is, the chief subjects of it, and was closely questioned thereon; two prizes, first and second, being awarded. Prizes were also given for the best recitation, memory and style both being considered. I forgot to mention that we frequently had recitations at our meetings, which made a