

Poultry Conference at Reading, England.

The poultry industry in England is going ahead, if one can judge by the success of the Second National Poultry Conference, which was held in Reading on July 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th. Under the direction of a representative committee of leading poultry-keepers and agriculturists, and attended by upwards of 250 delegates and members from all parts of the country, the effect upon the poultry industry of the country must be enormous. The programme was a full one, and it speaks well for the organization that the Conference passed off without a hitch. Under the patronage of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess Christian, of Schleswig-Holstein, with Sir Walter Palmer, Bart., as Chairman, Mr. Edward Brown, F. L. S., as Honorary Secretary, the following Societies and Colleges were represented: Board of Agriculture; Department of Agriculture and Technical Education for Ireland; South Australian Government Agency; Tasmanian Government Agency; Victorian Government Agency; Western Australian Government Agency; Provincial Government, Friesland, Holland; Royal Agricultural Society of England; Royal Dublin Society; Agricultural Organization Society; British Dairy Farmers' Association; Central and Associated Chamber of Agriculture; Ceylon Poultry Club; Hungarian Society in London; Imperial South African Association; National Poultry Organization Society; Poultry Club; Scottish Agricultural Organization Society; Transvaal Poultry Club; South African Utility Poultry Club; Women's Agricultural and Horticultural Union; Aspatia Agricultural College; Bradley Court Agricultural School; Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester; University College, Reading; West of Scotland Agricultural College; Antrim C. C. Agricultural Committee; Devon County Education Committee; Exeter County Education Committee; Glamorgan Chamber of Agriculture; Gloucester Agricultural Education Committee; Hereford County Education Committee; Kent Education Committee; Kirkcudbright Education Committee; Louth Committee of Agriculture; Reading Town Council; Somersetshire Chamber of Agriculture and South Somerset Farmers' Club; Somerset Education Committee; West Sussex Education Committee; Beaminster Poultry Society, Ltd.; Fairfield Egg Collecting Depot, Ltd.; Street & District Collecting Depot, Ltd.; Black Sumatra Game Fowl Club; Blue Langshan Club; Campine Club; Langshan Society; Old English Game Club; Variety Orpington Club.

The meetings were a success from the commencement. The opening ceremony, on Monday, July 8th, was a reception in the Town Hall, Reading, by the Mayor and Mayoress of Reading; E. Jackson, Esq., J. P., and Mrs. Jackson, when the delegates and members were welcomed to the town. In making the visitors welcome, the Mayor expressed regret that the Rt. Hon. the Earl Carrington, K. G., G. C. M. G., President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, who had intended being present to formally open the Conference, was unable, through affairs of State, to fulfil his promise, but he was pleased that Sir Thomas Elliott, K. C. B., had kindly stepped into the breach.

The business of the Conference opened on Tuesday, July 9th, and, owing to the fact that there were many papers to be read and discussed—34 in all—arrangements were made for two sections to be carried out at the same time. The subjects were divided into six sections, as follows:

- Section A.—Poultry Farming and Production.
- Section B.—Breeding.
- Section C.—Hygiene and Disease.
- Section D.—Women and the Poultry Industry.
- Section E.—Education and Research.
- Section F.—Commercial.

In Section A, under the Presidency of the Hon. Cecil T. Parker, the following papers were given: Scratching Sheds and Curtain-front Houses, by A. F. Hunter, of Abington, Mass., U. S. A.

The Colony-house System, by J. H. Robinson, Editor Farm Poultry, Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

Some Observations on Moisture and Ventilation in Incubators, by Will Brown, Esq., College Poultry Farm, Theale.

Modern Methods of Chicken-rearing, by Rouse Orlebar, Esq., J. P., D. L., of Hinwick Poultry Farm.

Lessons of the Laying Competitions:

- (a) British, by Cyril Dunkley, Esq., Hon. Sec. Utility Poultry Club Laying Competition.
- (b) Australian, by Major Norton, D. S. O., of South Australian Government Agency.

The Keeping of Fowls Permanently on Arable Land, by Miss A. S. Galbraith, of Bagshot.

Naturally, under the circumstances, one could not expect either Mr. A. F. Hunter or Mr. J. H. Robinson to be present, but their papers were thoroughly enjoyed by those present. It must be remembered that the experience of English poultry-keepers with scratching sheds and colony houses is only that gained during a comparatively short

number of years, and, therefore, the remarks by such well-known experts as Mr. Hunter and Mr. Robinson were listened to with added interest. A practical suggestion was made by one speaker, namely, that scratching sheds should be employed as movable houses and placed out on the land, but the general consensus of opinion was that the question of labor was greater with the colony system, and therefore it would fail to appeal to the farming community of England. It is undoubtedly a fact that Great Britain is not so suitable for intensive poultry-keeping as is perhaps America, and that it is believed that the difficulty in the country, in the way of supplying eggs for market, can only be solved when farmers realize that poultry can be made to pay; anything that entails extra work is vetoed by the English farmer.

Artificial Incubation.—Mr. Will Brown, of the College Poultry Farm, Theale, gave some highly interesting scientific facts with reference to the questions of ventilation and moisture in incubators. It was shown that the humidity of the egg chamber varies with the usual type of machine, according to the variations in the degree of humidity of the room in which the machines are placed, and that until machines are so constructed that the humidity and greater circulation of the air can be governed, really universal successful artificial hatching cannot be obtained. It was felt, as is always the case with such a gathering, that the subject was so technical and scientific that it would be impossible to discuss it without considerable thought, therefore no discussion followed.

Chicken-rearing.—The majority of those present, when Mr. Rouse Orlebar gave his paper on "Modern Methods of Chicken-rearing," seemed to be somewhat disappointed. The dry system of feeding chickens was introduced into England about a year ago from America, and undoubtedly it has become popular. The discussion which followed pointed to the fact that the modern method was certainly advantageous under certain conditions, but the general opinion was that the wet and dry systems of feeding should be carried out together. Certain breeders gave it as their opinion that, for large, weighty birds for the table, wet feeding must be followed; but, unfortunately, the whole discussion was most disappointing.

Laying Competitions.—Two capital papers were read under this heading, the "British" by Mr. Cyril Dunkley, Hon. Sec. Utility Poultry Club Laying Competition; and the "Australian" by Major Norton, D. S. O., South Australian Government Agency. In the former particulars were given of the Tenth Laying Competition, which was held from October, 1906, to February, 1907, over a period of sixteen weeks. The following scale was adopted for marking the eggs: Six points for eggs weighing 2 ounces and over; five points for eggs weighing 1½ ounces and over; four points for eggs weighing less than 1½ ounces. The question of feeding was entered into, but no fact of importance was disclosed. It was mentioned that the competition was becoming more popular every year, since the entries have risen from seven to over a hundred; in the latter case only forty pens were allotted places. The paper by Major Norton was distinctly more interesting, the opportunities of those working in the Commonwealth being greater, since the public support the movement, and therefore more rapid strides have been made. A two-years' competition is being carried out at Hawkesbury, in New South Wales, and this should produce good results. Moreover, the scale of marking was more favorable for increase in the production of birds which will lay large eggs, as well as a large number. In the discussion which followed, the British competition was severely criticised by two or three speakers. It was shown that, by the scale of marking adopted by the Utility Poultry Club, a premium was being put on those birds which produced a large number of eggs, irrespective of size and market value. It was shown from the Club's own report that the average of eggs in winning pens was well below 2 ounces, and it was stated that this was entirely due to the unfavorable scale of marking. It was suggested that the danger of the competition, as held at present, was that it would be used as an advertising medium by those breeders who had eggs for sale from birds which produced a goodly number of eggs, without any regard being paid to size. Figures were given showing that eggs on the English market weighing 1½ pounds to the 120, although only 9½ per cent. in weight less than those weighing 16 pounds, were valued at 22 per cent. less. This was considered important. Reference was made to the competition at Hawkesbury, N. S. W., in which case, out of a hundred pens entered, the eggs of only seven pens averaged under 2 ounces in weight, whereas in the last British competition, out of forty pens, only one averaged eggs of 2 ounces, all the others being considerably under this weight.

SECTION B.

Mendel's Law, and Its Application to Poultry-

breeding, by C. C. Hurst, Esq., F. L. S., of Burbage, Leicester.

Hybridization Experiments with Ceylon Jungle Fowl (*Gallus Stanleyii*), by Dr. J. Llewellyn Thomas, of Colombo, Ceylon.

The Economic Values of External Characters, by Mons. Louis Vandersnickt, of Brussels.

Breeding and Mating:

(a) Of Dorkings, by O. E. Cresswell, Esq., J. P., Morney Cross, Hereford.

(b) Of Leghorns, by L. C. Verrey, Esq., Oxshott, Surrey.

(c) Of Ducks, by W. Bygott, Esq., Ulceby, Lincolnshire.

"Without doubt, the most interesting papers were given in this section, for those by C. C. Hurst, Esq., and Dr. Llewellyn Thomas, Colombo, Ceylon, were listened to with keen attention. In speaking of the question of "Mendel's Law, and Its Application to Poultry-breeding," W. Bateson, Esq., Department of Agriculture, Cambridge University, indicated that the very groundwork of all experiments in this direction must be breeding for results from individuals, and not from pens of hens mated to one male. There were many factors to be taken into consideration, but at the very outset it must be realized that average results are of no use, and therefore individual birds must be depended upon entirely. It is a pleasing feature of the Conference that, though styled a "National" Conference, so many Colonial and foreign representatives were present, and in this section two of the readers of papers, namely, Dr. Llewellyn Thomas and Mons. Vandersnickt, are leading poultry experts in their own countries, and their experience is most interesting and instructive to British breeders.

UNIQUE POULTRY EXHIBITION.

The second and third days of the Conference were fully filled, since, in addition to the reading of papers on various subjects, a display of poultry was held. This was a show quite out of the usual run; there were no prizes, and only one pair of birds of each breed was staged. It was thought by the promoters of the Conference that it would be interesting, and at the same time instructive, to have a display of a large number of varieties of utility breeds, and to this end one hundred and fifty pairs were on view. It came as a revelation to many to find that there was so many distinct breeds and varieties, but this was hardly surprising, since many of them had never been seen in England before. There were ninety-three English, or, if we may so term them, "naturalized" English, pairs, the more uncommon of these being Aseels, White-crested Black Polish, Scotch Dummies, Sultans and Yokohamas. The ducks, geese and turkeys were simply the usual breeds, as seen at all shows. In the foreign section, Belgium was represented by eighteen pairs, the Netherlands by ten pairs, and France and Russia by a smaller number. The American type of Leghorn was shown by a pair of Whites from Mr. A. L. Brown, of Lakewood, Burrsville, N. J., U. S. A., and, for utility purposes, they compared very favorably with the extremely large English specimens. Perhaps the birds which aroused the most curiosity were the celebrated fighting geese of Russia. These were obtained by the Honorary Secretary of the Conference through the courtesy of the Imperial Poultry Club of Moscow, and as they came as a present to him, Mr. Edward Brown intends to breed them, so that observations may be made of any special characteristics which they may possess.

An excursion took place to the College Poultry Farm and Experimental Station in connection with the University College, Reading, and, since many experiments were nearing completion, it was most instructive. It will be remembered that the Poultry Farm at Theale was the first of its kind in Britain, and that it was established just one year prior to the first Experimental Station on this side of the water. The influence which the Farm has had on the industry of the country is enormous, for over 550 students have passed through courses of instruction there since it was commenced. It is considered in England, and, in fact, many parts of Europe, to be the center of the utility section of the poultry industry.

One feature of the Conference was the comprehensiveness of the programme; in fact, we are under the impression that it was rather too comprehensive, since the thirty-two papers which were read occupied so much time that there was little opportunity for public debate. This is unfortunate from one point of view, but it is undoubtedly correct that one benefit of such a conference is that breeders from all parts are able to come together and thrash out between themselves, at their private deliberations, the many vexed points connected with their work. The poultry industry of England requires "hustling" in certain directions, and it is expected that improved methods of production and more up-to-date systems of packing and marketing will assuredly follow.

The section dealing with "Education and Re-