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**THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE**

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# Mother's Hens

By Mrs. F. E. Shepherd, Stalwart, Sask.

Editor's Note.—This, the sixth chapter of "Mother's Hens," tells of some of the difficulties which cause an inexperienced poultry keeper a good deal of trouble. Just as with every other line of work, success with poultry is obtained thru experience, and the recounting of that experience, as told by Mrs. Shepherd, is what constitutes the value of these articles to our readers. If you want to make money from your chickens you should read all these chapters. If you have missed any of them, look up your back numbers or write to The Guide for any copies you have missed.

CHAPTER VI

When Mrs. Hazelton came back from taking her husband's lunch one day the following week she saw a strange buggy standing at the door and on going inside she found a sweet-faced elderly woman seated in her own particular rocking-chair evidently waiting for her return. Margaret immediately stretched out both hands in welcome.

"I know who you are," she exclaimed. "You are Mrs. Robinson, I am sure."

"And I know who you are," replied her visitor. "You are young Will Hazelton's wife. I heard you were worrying about your poultry, and as I had just two hours to wait in between trains I thought I would run up and see you. Now we won't waste a lot of time talking about a lot of things we are not interested in, but get right down to business. See, I have kept my hat on, let's go out and walk around, I can always talk better out of doors."

Margaret led the way to where she had arranged her coops in a neat long row. "There," she said proudly, "they are all ready. I hope in about a week they will have a nice lot of chickens in them."

Mrs. Robinson looked dubiously around. There was quite a wind on and it had tilted her hat to a rakish angle, while Margaret tied her sunbonnet on tighter yet.

"But, my dear child," she expostulated, "why, oh why, have you put them right out here in the open? The winds will surely blow them over."

Mrs. Hazelton looked surprised. "Why," she said, "I thought everybody said chickens wanted plenty of fresh air."

"So they do," replied her visitor, "but they will get plenty enough in some more sheltered place. You seem to have quite a lot of granaries around. Get Will to hitch on and pull two of them together to form an angle to make a shelter from the north and westerly winds. Put your coops there facing south and your chicks will grow twice as fast."

"Alright," said Margaret, "only I don't like bothering Will when he comes in to dinner, he is tired and the horses are tired too."

"My dear child," sagely remarked the elder woman, as she laid her hand on Margaret's shoulder, "when you have been married as many years as I have you will never ask a man to do anything for you when he comes in to his dinner, but make him something extra special for supper some evening. Then coax him to do it before he takes the harness off his horses. Me! oh my! if there is anything that wants more careful handling than a newly hatched chicken you are just taking out of the shell it is a husband; but you know the old saying, 'Feed the brute.'"

Margaret laughed merrily as she opened the door of the old sod house

where her setting hens were. They passed in very gently so as not to disturb them.

"There they are," said Margaret, satisfied that here at least her visitor could find no fault; "there are twelve of them, aren't they beauties? See, I can stroke them or do anything with them," suiting the action to the word.

"Oh, you naughty hen!" she exclaimed. "Whatever have you been doing? I only gave you thirteen eggs and you must have got twenty nearly."

The big Wyandotte was trying in vain to cover them all, while her next door neighbor was disconsolately hugging the remaining six. Mrs. Robinson sat down on an old box.

"She has been stealing them," she remarked severely, "and if you don't do something different here pandemonium will reign when they start hatching. You will have to get some shallow boxes with neither top nor bottom and slip over each hen—if you haven't got any, get some six or eight inch boards and knock some together. If you don't they will often leave a whole nest full of even 'pipped' eggs to get hold of one that is running around. I always take the chicks away as fast as they are hatched and keep them in an old hat at the back of the stove until they are all out, leaving the old hen with about two to keep her quiet until next morning. Of course you don't raise her right off the nest to get them, only slip your fingers under her. Be sure and take away the empty egg shells, too, or they will sure telescope over the remaining eggs and smother the later hatching chicks. Have you any turkey hens setting yet?" she enquired.

"Oh, yes," said Margaret gleefully. "You just come and see her, she is sitting on that flax pile over there. Will said 'Leave her alone, she knows more about where she wants to set than you do.'"

"H'm, h'm," said the more experienced woman, looking doubtfully at the dark clouds racing across the sky. "When this wind drops it is going to rain some and then that flax will heat and rot and spoil all those eggs. I lost a whole setting of early turkey eggs that way once. Hay, wheat or oat straw does not seem to matter so much, but flax straw—never again. You be persuaded by me, dear, and this very evening quite late, make a big comfortable nest right in one of the corners of your setting house and transfer her there, eggs and all. If she has been setting a week or ten days the germs have settled a little and if you handle them very, very gently it won't hurt them a bit. No, she won't forsake them. Turkey hens are the very best setters and mothers of any kind of poultry."

Margaret willingly agreed to do as advised and the two women wandered around by the garden.

"You can't see anything yet," said the younger woman, poking among the dry earth for some sign of life, "but most of the seeds are in. Will said it

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