

Mother's Hens

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

Editor's Note.—Eggs are cheap now. The best thing to do with any you do not require for hatching purposes is to "put them down in lime water." This week's "Mother's Hens" contains directions as to preserving eggs for sale at Christmas, and also tells how to successfully hatch turkeys. Have you read the previous chapters? All these stories describe practical experience with poultry on a Western farm. Every farmer's wife should read them and take advantage of the chance of learning how to make her poultry pay.

CHAPTER IV.

While they were having their tea they chatted and gossiped on the thousand and one things women are always interested in, knitting for the soldiers being the chief topic of conversation. Mrs. Hazelton considering it best to use all her spare time that way, while Mrs. Creighton was equally certain it was better to deny herself a new hat she had set her heart on and send the money it would have cost to buy some tobacco and cigarettes for them. At last Margaret jumped up.

"Well, now, I suppose it is time to feed the hens and hunt the eggs. Will you come with me?"

"Sure I will, I want to see your buildings," was the emphatic reply, "my hens always roost in a corner of the barn, and the language Jim uses when he goes to feed oats or brush out the buggy is something fierce."

"I am afraid you won't think much of my 'buildings,'" said Margaret, leading the way to them, greeted by her feathered flock rushing to her from all parts of the farmyard. "You see they

are only made of sod. Will says his mother says they are warmer than any other kind. They are made very thick and will stand for years, only you have to be careful to see it doesn't let the wind in between the top of the walls and the roof, which you see is only odd bits of lumber, then tar paper, then one layer of sod, last of all a lot of flax straw put on slant ways to shed the rain. There is nothing expensive here. Most of the coops she made herself."

Mrs. Creighton nodded, her quick eye had noticed several of them were covered with discarded oilcloth from the kitchen table.

The eggs were collected and admired, and after proudly writing them down in her little account book, sixty-four in all, Mrs. Hazelton proceeded to finish her mother's letter.

"And now about my precious turkeys. I think every farmer's wife dislikes to raise turkeys, for the simple reason they are so much trouble, but I really think my turkey hens are not quite so much bother as some people's. I fix some apple barrels firmly at the back of the henhouses, and put in them some nice hay and several china eggs, and they generally lay there. If one strays away and makes a nest somewhere else, get Will to put one of the largest coops over her nest while she is off feeding. This will protect her from the heavy rains we get sometimes. I don't believe in trusting too much to nature. She is rather inclined to play tricks with us sometimes. About dusk put a couple of handfuls of grain close to where each one is setting, and beyond looking at them once a day they will be no further trouble.

"Now, when they begin to hatch out—I am sure you will think they are the prettiest little things you ever saw—as soon as they are dry bring them indoors and put them in the nursery of the incubator, that is the space underneath the egg tray, only leaving the turkey hen about two to keep her happy. Get Will to lift one of the wagon boxes off its wheels onto the ground and put a big coop in it. Next morning, early, put her and the two little ones in the coop and shut her in good and tight, give her a good feed of grain and a very shallow tin of water, and the rest of her hatch at odd times during the day, one or two at a time. She will never peck you. I like turkeys, they are so gentle. Feed them the same as you do chickens, an egg boiled hard and put thru the mincing machine and half a cup each of rolled oats, breadcrumbs, bran and shorts mixed all together dry. No wet mashes for little turkeys, my dear, but if you have any money knocking around—somehow the money all seems to go for plow shares or blacksmith's coal or some other uninteresting thing—get yourself a bag of good chick meal. You can use it sometimes when you are extra busy.

"You can let the mother turkey get out and in the wagon box at will after three days, but be sure and keep the little ones in at least two weeks. They will peep, peep, peep, and look so miserable, but be hard-hearted and tell them its only their fancy thinking they want to get out. Anyway you will be able to call the roll every night and they will all be there, whereas, if you let them go while they are so very young the weaker ones straggle behind and get lost altogether. Be sure and never leave any water around in pails where little turkeys are. All summer I use an old road scraper for the general drinking vessel of the whole flock of poultry, but little turkeys seem to have a positive mania for committing suicide by drowning."

"And that's so, too," interjected Mrs. Creighton. "Last summer I lost five about six weeks' old, drowned themselves one after the other in a pail

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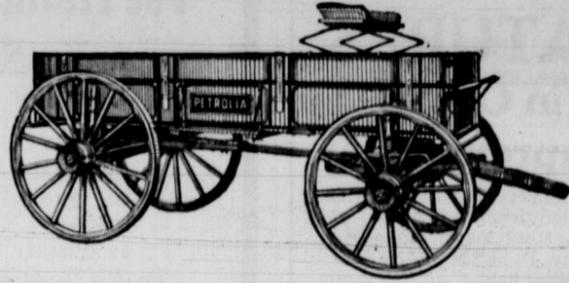
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