

The Farm.

Practical Autumn Hints in Poultry-keeping.

Said a farmer to me not long since: "I see that there is a lot to learn about this poultry business before we can make it pay."

"Is there any department of farm work that you can make remunerative without thoroughly understanding the details of management?" I asked.

"No," said he, "I guess you have to know what you are at."

There is no dodging this fact. The up-to-date farmer must be expert in the lines of work he handles or he will not be to the fore. Live agricultural journals, agricultural colleges and experimental work are all valuable means to a profitable end.

No. 1 makes his poultry pay. He keeps track of receipts and expenditure. His fowls are thoroughbreds, of the proper age, well housed, and they laid well during last winter. As a result he had early sitters, and his chickens were early hatched: At date his cockerels are fit, or very nearly so, for market, and his pullets will make early layers.

No. 2 has a mixed lot of birds. He has kept no account of their operations, and cannot say whether they pay or not. His hens had a cold habitation last winter, and did not lay, but began to do so in the spring when everybody's hens were laying and eggs were at low figures. In consequence, he had late sitters and his chickens are late. Being nondescripts, his cockerels will not make the weight of thoroughbreds and his pullets will likely be caught by winter weather before they are matured.

CULLING OUT AND PREPARING FOR WINTER.

Quite a contrast in the mode of operations of the two parties above, is there not? But what is No. 2 to do to improve his condition? His plan is to at once cull out his flock. Select his largest and best shaped hens of two years and under. If any are known to be poor layers get rid of them. Fatten up the old hens before they begin to moult and eat or market them. Sell them for such and nothing else. Feed the younger stock so as to have them winter layers. House them fairly well, and sell the winter eggs at the highest price to be obtained in the best market. I have not presumed that either of the above parties use incubators, as some progressive farmers do in order to have early chickens of the same age.

FATTENING OF OLD AND YOUNG BIRDS FOR MARKET.

I think I hear some one exclaim on reading the above: "Just fancy! He advises the fattening of the old birds to sell on the market. How dreadful!" Not so bad as you think. Take a properly fattened three-year-old Plymouth Rock hen, and let it slowly simmer in boiling water for an hour for every year of its age. Then stuff it; let it brown for half an hour, and when dished up it makes a good dinner. After being boiled tender it may be preferred in the shape of pie. "Tried it yourself?" Yes, dozens of times, and so have many others who are up in poultry breeding. A friend came to me some years ago when I kept Plymouth Rocks on my own account, and said, in a confidential manner, "What do you do with your old Rock hens?" "Eat them," I replied. "Oh," said he, "I did not think you were so well up. When I want to enjoy the fully developed poultry flavor I have an old thoroughbred hen, properly cooked, for dinner. Yes, you know, is immature meat; young chicken is undeveloped poultry." I do not endorse his whole statement. I give it to you as he made it. Perhaps I will be now met with the statement that the great majority of our farmers have not thoroughbred hens to market. Well, the moral is obvious: Keep thoroughbred poultry.

Scattering Weed Seeds.

In putting down the weeds the first essential thing is to stop the scattering of the seeds. In the late summer and autumn seeds are blown about freely by the wind, and are carried from one State to another by birds. The ideal way is to cut down the weeds before they go to seed; then neither birds nor wind can scatter them. But while every farmer might do this there would still be enough weeds left in the abandoned places and along the roadsides to keep up the supply.

One of the most frequent methods of spreading weeds is through the use of manure that comes from unknown sources. Manure that comes from city stables is invariably free from all weed seeds, but such fertilizer that comes from the country is very apt to contain the seeds of noxious weeds that will germinate and spread as soon as applied to the land. The Canada thistle, pigweed, and innumerable other pests of this character have spread throughout the country through the manure more than by the wind or railroads. Manure full of weed seeds is not worth the room it takes up, and one cannot be too careful in avoiding it. In the end it will cause more trouble than it will do good. The farmer who is so careless and shiftless as to let weeds grow all over the manure pile, and go to seed there, does not deserve to find a customer for it. Yet this is often the case. Bagweed, golden-rod and pigweed cover many a pile of manure in this country, and there is no effort made to check their growth before they go to seed. In the winter time or early spring this manure is spread over the cultivated fields, with the weed seeds in it, and the result is easily guessed. With a little more care a good deal of labor might be avoided. Weeds should not be allowed to mature anywhere, least of all those growing on or near the manure heap.—W. E. Farmer, in Wisconsin Agriculturist.

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