

CLEANLINESS.

The floor of the roosting house should be covered two inches deep with ashes from the hearth, finely riddled; or with dry sand, earth, or peat moss. These catch the droppings and act as deodorisers. In very warm weather the excrement should be removed daily, and in every case not less than once a week. The manure should be stowed away in a dry place, and is very valuable for grass crops or for garden purposes. Where the excrement is allowed to accumulate month after month, what wonder if the constitution of the birds is weakened through breathing foul air, and that they readily die of disease!

INSECT PESTS.

Another branch of cleanliness is to see that the birds and their houses are free from vermin. Of the many kinds three deserve special notice.

1. The parasite which infests the body of the fowl. These should be destroyed by dusting well into the fluff and under the wings with insect-powder. A cheap and effective kind is made by mixing together equal quantities of Dalmatian insect-powder, and flowers of sulphur. More little chickens dwindle and die from these parasites, caught from the old hen's fluff, than from every other cause put together. If chickens ail, examine and apply the powder. The hens should be provided with a good dust bath, which is a great aid to their cleanliness.

2. The red mite, a tiny bug which swarms under the perches or in cracks or crevices, and comes out at night and sucks the blood from the fowl. Painting the perches with paraffin oil, if regularly done, say once a month, and lime-washing the house frequently, mixing a little carbolic acid in the wash, will keep them down, though they are difficult to dislodge if they once take hold. Many failures to obtain eggs in winter must be attributed to this source, as the fowl are subject to these pests during the long winter evenings for twelve or sixteen hours without rest.

3. The poultry-flea, which makes its presence acutely felt from April to October, even attacking the person of the poultry-attendant. These can be kept down altogether by cleanliness, by frequently changing the material in

the laying nest, and by whitewashing as directed above. If the dried leaves of the common bracken fern are used to make the nest, it is said that poultry-fleas will be absent.

FEEDING.

Feeding poultry is an art in itself, and only brief hints can be given here. For laying fowl two meals a day are sufficient. The first should be given early in the morning (in winter as soon as they are let out). The ideal morning meal consists of equal quantities of barleymeal, sharps, or middlings, and finely ground oats, scalded and mixed together into a crumbly mass; to this may be added any scraps from the table. If small potatoes are plentiful and cheap they may be mixed with the above; but they are very fattening, and should be used with care. The evening meal should consist of hard grain: wheat, oats, barley, *dari*, or buckwheat, are all suitable. Indian corn, if given at all, should be sparingly employed, as it is too fattening for laying hens, and deficient in egg-forming materials. It is useful for the sitting hen, and for an occasional meal in very cold or frosty weather. Fresh water should be given once or more daily, in clean earthenware vessels by preference, and should be kept out of the sun. Unless the birds have a good grass run, green food, in the form of cabbages or swede turnips, should be regularly supplied. Food should never be allowed to lie about from one meal to another. Another most important item to be regularly supplied is grit, to assist the digestion of the food. Flint grit is the best, and can be bought at five shillings per hundredweight, which is enough to last a hundred fowl for a year. But any broken plates or china, or glass, if broken into pieces about the size of split peas, will answer the purpose. A small box should be provided to put it in, from which the birds will readily help themselves. It can then be easily seen when more is needed. Many fowl mope and die from indigestion and kindred ailments for want of grit.

As a last word of advice, let me caution you never to allow your laying hens to get fat, or you will have an empty egg-basket. They should be fed sparingly and with discretion, other-