

they begin to quit laying. When these rations are entirely cut off by severe winter weather, the supply of eggs ceases. The two results occur with so much uniformity, as to satisfy me that the production of eggs is dependent on the supply of animal food.

"Every farmer," he added, "knows that hens do not lay in cold weather, but few understand the cause, or if they do, they are too careless to apply the remedy. I have learned to look upon a hen as a mere machine for manufacturing eggs. She may be likened to a sausage-stuffer. If you introduce into it no nicely seasoned compound of the proper materials, I wonder how it can be expected to turn out sausages? It is precisely so with a hen,—if you expect her to turn out eggs, you must introduce into the wonderful machine, which grinds up worms and sheep's pluck into eggs, some assortment of the materials that will enable her to project them regularly every day.

"Now the machine will certainly work, if you keep up its energies by giving it such food as it needs. Our stoves require twice as much feeding in cold weather as they do in summer, and I never yet saw a grist-mill that would turn out flour unless you put grain into the hopper. There is another curious fact which long practice in poultry-raising has brought under my notice; that is, that eggs laid by a hen well supplied with animal food are not only larger in size, but richer in quality. My Trenton storekeeper often tells me that my eggs are larger than any other winter-laid ones that he sees, and that they generally sell for a few cents more per dozen. All these odds and ends of pluck and giblets that my fowls get during the winter cost very little money. But in return for that outlay, look at the result,—I really double the length of the laying season, adding the increase at the very time when eggs are scarce, and bringing the highest prices. If it were not for this plan of feeding, I don't believe my poultry-keeping would pay much profit. To make poultry profitable you must exercise care. But can you make *anything* pay without careful management? If there be such things, I should like to know what they are."

"I think you have hit it this time also," observed Uncle Benny. "Whatever your hand touches seems to prosper."

"But most of these little variations from the practice of other farmers are not of my own originating," replied Mr. Allen. "I learned them principally from books and periodicals. From one I obtained the whole formula of how to proceed, while in another a mere hint was dropped. But even a hint, Uncle Benny, is sufficient for an observing mind. Some which struck me as pointing to valuable results I followed up and improved

upon to the greatest advantage. Now I have a treasury of these things, which I will show you."

He led the whole company forward into the house, and ushered them into a room which he called the library. There were shelves covering two sides of a very capacious room, filled with books, periodicals, and newspapers. The old man glanced hastily at the titles, and found that there were works on history, biography, and travels, with at least thirty volumes of different agricultural publications, showing that Mr. Allen was a close student of whatever was passing in the agricultural world, keeping up, from week to week, with the wonderful progress which is everywhere witnessed in the art of tilling and improving the soil, and with the multitude of valuable suggestions and experiences which crowd the agricultural publications of our country. There were also pen and ink, paper, and an account-book, always convenient for making an entry when in a hurry. On another table, especially provided for the boys, were similar conveniences. In short, the whole arrangements and appliances of the room were such as would make them attractive to boys who had the least fondness for reading, while they would be potent helpers to such as were ambitious of acquiring knowledge. They gave unmistakable indications of Mr. Allen's mind and taste, showing that within doors, as well as without, his ambition was to be progressive.

Uncle Benny looked round the comfortable room in silent admiration, and determined in his own mind that he would make renewed efforts to put within reach of the Spanglers some additional portion of the great volume of current knowledge adapted to their condition. Even they were struck with the cosiness of the quiet room, the two older ones contrasting it with the comfortless kitchen which was their only refuge at home.

"This is a popular place for a stormy day, Uncle Benny," observed Mr. Allen. "This and the workshop are great institutions on my farm. I am sometimes at a loss to know which the boys like best. But the variety, the change from one to the other, is a valuable incident of both. The workshop is excellent by daylight, but here they can spend their evenings, and here the whole family can gather together. It becomes, in fact, the family fireside; and there is no school so important as that. My children learn much at school, but here they learn infinitely more,—the cultivation of the affections, the practice of good manners, the lessons which are to fit them for future usefulness and respectability, and I trust for happiness hereafter. This fireside education is woven in with every woof of their childhood, and it is such that it must in every case give form and color to the whole texture of human life. I never had a home like this until I created it for myself. Had I been granted the boyish opportunities that you see I am so careful to bring within reach of my children, I should have been far better informed than I am. There is no show about it;—show may be easily purchased, but happiness is a home-made article."

"I look upon you as an example," replied Uncle Benny. "Neither do I wonder at everything seeming to prosper that you undertake. Your children must rise up and call you blessed."