

Poultry.

About Nests.

It may seem to some persons that nest-making is one of the easiest things imaginable, says the Poultry Monitor. And so it is. But for all, there is a knack in making a good nest—a nest that will be comfortable and clean, and well adapted to the purposes for which it is intended. One thing that is of paramount importance about nests is to keep them clean, and the cause of many of our fowls being infested with vermin is in the general carelessness about nests. A nest box is fitted and filled with suitable material, and here the patient hens may sit one after the other from early spring to midsummer, and hatch out brood after brood on the same straw. Here, too, lice find a congenial harbor and breed in safety, for they have plenty of the filth they delight in.

Hens left to their own instincts may need no looking after, in fact they seem to do quite as well, and sometimes better, than if set under the most favorable circumstances. But to allow hens to follow the bent of their inclinations, when we design them to hatch fancy eggs would, as a rule, be wrong. However, in our artificial method of treating sitting hens, we can at least imitate nature as near as possible, for the best results usually follow close attention, care and watching. In preparing nests, take a good sized sod and invert it in the box, fashion it like one a hen makes if left to herself. Over this put some fresh-cut straw, made limp and soft by bruising. If this is not done the sharp ends of the straw would irritate both hen and chicks.

Evils of Over-feeding.

One of the signs of over-feeding a laying hen is the egg-shells become thin, then no shell at all. The hen drops her soft egg when on the perch at night, and eats it the first thing in the morning. The owner wonders his hen does not lay, although she is so red! He should be up before day-break, and armed with a spoon, save his egg.

It is impossible to breed profitable chickens from overfed and stimulated fowls. A bilious hen cannot lay a well developed egg; and unless all the matter necessary to form a chick be in due proportion and of good and sufficient quality in the egg, the chick cannot develop its several organs and parts in perfection. Consequently the owner of greasy, fat, bilious, back-yard fowls has to go abroad for his eggs for hatching; has to take his chances of what he gets. He is always befogged and never knows what he may expect.

If a man has a good layer and wants to breed equally good or better pullets from her, he should feed her moderately on fine sharps or middlings, barley, oats, buckwheat or wheat (not a particle of that oily rubbish, maize); plenty of green stuff, turnips, wurzel, onions, etc.; move her from place to place to put her off laying for a time. Get her into good healthy condition. Her feathers should be clean and close fitting, the bloom gleam again in the sunlight. Then mate her with a bird equally well prepared, and set the first twelve or fifteen eggs. He will not be disappointed.

Some of the delusions of the cottager are that a hen should be served in the same way as a

bolster—stuffed, choked and kept so; should be like a druggist's shop, well stuffed with spices and drugs; that an egg is an egg. But there is as much difference in the quality of eggs as there is between small beer and stingo. Customers hunt the man with stingo eggs, but the man with small beer eggs has to hunt for customers. It is also a matter of brag for a man to stuff and stimulate pullets to lay cob-nut eggs at the earliest possible moment—"Soon ripe, soon rotten."—[National Poultry Monitor.]

In-and-In Breeding.

Incestuous—so called—or in-and-in breeding, seems to be a great bugbear to many breeders, and I think without cause, says Dr Foreman in National Poultry Monitor. I maintain that the only true way to arrive at the perfection of an ideal is to select a pair of birds which mate properly, and breed them; then from their progeny, another pair; and so on, generation after generation, until the ideal is attained. There are physiologists who doubt if the disastrous results which sometimes follow in the wake of consanguineous marriages among the *genus homo* are dependent upon that fact *per se*. It certainly is true that all consanguineous marriages do not produce, as a consequence, evil results. It is also true that the progeny of many parents are seriously deficient, both mentally and physically, even when the parties to the marriage are perfect in both respects and not at all blood related. It follows, then, that some other cause than the consanguinity of parents may work disastrously to the progeny. Let us be careful, then, not to cripple our resources and miss the mark of our ideal by riding a hobby. It, I believe, is well known that the present breed of Short-horn cattle has been brought about by a careful in-and-in breeding, and that the early propagators of that stock were as careful to exclude outside blood as some of our poultry breeders are to introduce it.

The habits of at least some wild animals and birds give the lie to the doctrine of incest. Take the common quail. A pair rears a brood of twelve or fifteen young ones. They remain in one flock, if unmolested, until they pair off in the spring, and unless there is an odd one, it is doubtful if one of them ever goes out of the covey, composed wholly of its father and mother, brothers and sisters, for a mate. The quail has certainly not deteriorated either in body, feathers or vitality. The truth is, there is no way of fixing a quality in an animal except by in-and-in breeding. If the doctrine of an original single pair be true, as is maintained by both scientists and Christians, this method of breeding was a primitive necessity, and by its means, no doubt, were the different types of animal life established. Man exercises judgment, discretion and common sense in breeding or propagating everything under his control except his own progeny. That, presumably, is unworthy his exalted ambition. No man can hope to breed any bird up to an ideal until he takes into consideration the fact that the imperfections of the parents, whether of feather, form or constitution, will as certainly appear in the progeny as the desirable qualities. Hence, you may place a flock of the finest Light Brahmas ever produced by Felch or Williams in the hands of a common farmer, and let him breed promiscuously, good, bad and indifferent, and in a few years they will be run down in color, form

and constitution. But let a poultry breeder select from the same flock the best birds for a few years in succession, and he can restore them to their original vigor and beauty.

But especially does the necessity of close breeding exist in such new varieties as the Wyandotte. Every bird is liable to breed back and produce more or less of the infirmities common to the flock or parentage from which it came. Hence the necessity of excluding foreign blood if an ideal is ever to be obtained. Let every breeder ask himself the question whether he knows by careful observation that in-and-in breeding results so disastrously as he has been led to believe, and I think there are but few who so believe but will be compelled to admit he has believed on insufficient evidence.

Fertilized eggs, or eggs that will produce chickens, can be distinguished in from five to seven days after the hen begins to sit on them. If held against a strong light the germ may be seen in a dark spot, and the examination may be relied upon. If no dark spot is visible at the end of seven days, the egg is sterile and may be removed. When examination shows the shell full and dark, the chick is within a day or two of hatching, and if the little bird is alive the ear will readily detect its movements within the shell. Eggs for hatching should be selected with care. The largest are not always the best. Choose the medium-sized and those that taper sharply to the small end. Carefully examined against a strong light, eggs may be selected which in nine cases out of ten will hatch.—[Orange County Farmer.]

Mr. Franklin, as reported in the *Home-Steak*, says the reason for finding so many dead chickens in the shells at the end of the period of incubation is the lack of moisture in the eggs, thus causing a thick, mucilaginous substance to adhere to the backs of the chicks, and almost cementing them in their prison shells; also the want of vitality and strength in chicks to break the shells. Eggs of Asiatics are harder to hatch than other breeds, Leghorns the easiest. The best breed for early spring chicks, for raising broilers, etc., is a cross of Light Brahmas and Plymouth Rocks, which produces a large, strong chick that grows rapidly, feathers early, has a yellow skin, dresses off plump and fine, and are by far the most profitable to raise for early chicks. One of the principal reasons for lack of fertility of eggs in cold weather is confinement of the hens, their yards and runs being covered with ice, etc. Long experience has proved that the laying hens require outdoor exercise to make their eggs hatch well during the cold winter months. The incubator is indispensable if very early chicks are to be hatched, and the brooder is just as important to raise them in any season, as the rate of mortality is so much lower than by the mother hen.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" is a proverb that cannot always be relied on. If the man with the bird in the hand kills the bird, the latter had better remain in the bush. The existing practice of killing birds for the purpose of decorating ladies' hats should give rise to the proverb: "A bird in the bush is worth two in the hat." Killing birds is not only a shamefully cruel practice, but also ruinous to the best interests of the people. The chief cause of destructive insects, which destroy crops to the value of many millions of dollars annually, is the destruction of birds which feed upon them. Associations ought to be formed everywhere for the protection of birds.