

INCUBATORS and BROODERS.



We invite correspondence for this important department of commercial poultry raising, which is growing so rapidly in Canada.

SOME INCUBATOR TALK.

It is really astonishing the number of people who buy incubators and brooders, and rush headlong at the broiler business before they know how to get a good hatch from a sitting hen, or raise first-class chickens with hen mothers. It seems that these broiler-struck men and women think that to hatch and raise a thousand chickens by artificial methods must be easier than to hatch and raise a hundred by natural methods. One woman who admitted that she had never succeeded in getting half a hatch from her hens, and never raised half that did hatch, wrote me that she was "disgusted with sitting hens," and asked my advice about getting an incubator and brooder and going into the broiler business. I told her in the plainest English at command that she had better stick to the natural hatchers and brooders until she learned how to run them successfully and profitably: but all the same she bought a 600-egg incubator, some brooders, and went in. She failed utterly, and of course laid the blame on the incubator; and to this day she considers all incubators worthless, all incubator manufacturers a set of unprincipled swindlers, their circulars solid lies, and their testimonials but wild romances made to order. She entirely ignores the fact that I took her incubator, and without any alteration whatever, obtained a hatch of 70 per cent. (all strong, healthy chicks) at the first trial. Probably she thinks I lied about it.

Her case is but one of dozens that have come within my knowledge. Every season my life is made almost a burden by the letters from the disappointed ones. From a dozen letters taken at random from those received during the last half of February and first of March. I take the following complaints: "My incubator does not hatch at all"—"Only got thirty chicks from 300 eggs"—"From 300 eggs got twenty-four chicks." Half of them deformed."—"Can hatch a good per cent, but can't raise them. Most of 'em die before they are three weeks old."—"Chicks (full-grown) dead in the shell at hatching time."—"Not a live chick from 200 eggs. A few dead in the shell, but most of the eggs rotten."—"A few chicks came out on time, but most of them died after pipping the shell. Stuck fast—dried in. Tried to help them and saved a few, which are growing nicely; but most of those that I tried to help bled to death"—"Eighty-two chicks from 390 eggs. Came out the twenty-second and twenty-third days. A weak lot and all but four were dead at the end of the first week." And so on through the list.

In just about eight weeks I spent all the time I could spare, and some that I could not afford to spare, writing these complainants—trying to help them out, for I realized that failure in most of the cases would be a serious affair—that they had spent money which they could ill afford to spare. Three of the dozen are still wrestling with their incubators and brooders, and making a losing game of it; eight have given up disgusted, and one wrote me a few days ago that he had just obtained 198 strong healthy chicks from 252 tested eggs. I believe he will raise most of them because he has been successful in raising chicks by the natural methods, and he was the only one of the dozen that had thus been successful. He was also the only one who did

not lay the blame of failure on the incubator or brooder, or both. All the others condemned the incubators and brooders, and the names some of them bestowed upon the manufacturers of said machines fairly made me shudder. But I do not hesitate to say that in nine of the other cases the failures in hatching and raising were due to the ignorance and incapacity of those who managed affairs. In one case the incubator was about as near worthless as it is possible for an incubator to be, and about the other I am not sure.

So far as my experience goes this is about the usual proportion: Where one failure is due to the worthlessness of the incubator, nine are due to the ignorance of the operator. I speak thus positively because I have investigated many cases of failure when the machines were of the same make that many others were using successfully; and many of the incubators that failed to work were afterwards sold to parties who obtained good hatches at the first trial, and that, too, without any "fixing over" of the machines. I know of one Monarch that two men failed with last season, that

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