

Poultry Notes.—No. 8.

Treatment of Hatching Hen.

The desire for incubation in the hen is involved in as much mystery as are several other operations of nature; but whatever the cause from which it proceeds, it is a wise provision, although it sometimes causes much annoyance and inconvenience to the poultry-keeper. Much of the success in hatching chickens depends on the breeder's knowledge of the proper treatment of the hatching hen during incubation. In their natural state, fowls will seek a sheltered nook or corner, and there make their nests and hatch their young; and therefore it has been argued by many that this is the only true way to raise chickens successfully. But it ought to be borne in mind, that fowls in this state seldom commence laying till late in the season, and when the state of the weather precludes any possibility of their eggs and young being injured by cold; neither will they lay more than one brood in the season. It is different with poultry as now bred, either by farmers or fanciers. The domestic fowl of the present day is an artificial bird, and therefore requires artificial treatment; to follow nature, then, would be to give up all idea of obtaining eggs or profit from poultry-keeping. It is not one brood of chickens from one hen we want, but several; and to thoroughly understand how to produce these, and yet keep fowls in a perfect state of health, is one of the great secrets of poultry-keeping.

The place selected and the hen comfortably fixed, she must be allowed to remain quiet for some time; food and water should be placed near her, and her excrements removed daily. In cold weather she should not be allowed to be absent from the eggs more than a few minutes at a time, and even in warm weather, twenty minutes will frequently addle all the eggs, but we have frequently allowed hens to remain off fully half an hour in warm weather and no injury to the chicks occurred. In the early stages of hatching, eggs are more liable to be addled than at a later period, that is during the first two weeks. Animal life in its simplest form of existence can be maintained at a much lower temperature than in a higher; and for this reason, at the earlier periods of hatching the sitting hen may be absent for a prolonged time without injury, whereas a much shorter neglect of her duties would be fatal near the day of hatching. There are, however, exceptions even to this, and it has been proved that in ordinary weather eggs will survive even a very long absence of the hen. It is related by a poultry writer, that he had a hen which was absent several hours in the middle of hatching, and still brought out a fair number of chickens; and on another occasion, the very last day of incubation, the hen absented herself so long that the eggs became really stone cold. The particulars of the case are worth relating. At the end of nearly three weeks the hen manifested the unnatural vice of breaking the eggs and eating the nearly developed chickens, and finally abandoned the nest altogether. An absence of several hours occurred before this was discovered, and the eggs were then stone cold. They were immediately gathered from the nest, with, of course, little hopes of ever realizing chickens, and placed in a vessel of water heated to fully 105 degrees, whilst another hen was being procured. In about ten minutes six of the eggs showed signs of life, and eventually hatched out. We could relate other instances of a nearly similar kind which occurred with hatching eggs of our own, but the above is sufficient to prove the exception, and should act as a warning to all breeders not to arrive too hastily at the conclusion that valuable eggs may be lost, even if they do get chilled. From whatever reason, if eggs explode at the end of the period of hatching, or are decomposed or in any way changed in color, it proves that they have been fertilized and began to hatch, and had their vitality destroyed by some means or other. This may have

occurred in several ways; fecundation may not have been sufficiently strong, to produce chicks; the eggs may have been chilled before being gathered from the nest when laid, or the sitting hen may have been inattentive to her maternal duties, and during the process of hatching became chilled. In any such case, chickens would not hatch. Barren eggs remain a clear yellow to the last, and only emit a strong musty smell.

Too many hens should not be allowed to sit in the same house or pen. From this arises another fruitful source of bad hatching. Hens are of a perverse inclination, and frequently go to the others' nest instead of their own. Each hen should therefore have a pen entirely to herself, and it should be large enough to admit of a dust pan, and pans for food and water to be placed inside. But when hens are shut up in this manner on their nests, they ought to be removed daily, and watched to see that each returns to her own nest again, and not remain away too long at a time. Close attention ought to be given to hatching eggs at all seasons, but especially at this time of the year; particular care should therefore be paid to the nests, as if made on the ground, the eggs may get chilled. A good plan in such a case would be to put a shovelful of dry ashes under the nest, as already hinted, and about four days before hatching pour some boiling water close round the nest on the ground, that is if the weather is not frosty so as to freeze the water into ice. The treatment of the eggs in warm and dry weather will be different, the moisture of the eggs will be evaporated, which renders the chickens unable to crack the shell in half, and consequently unless assisted will perish. On this point Mr. Wright says, "attempting then to keep the nest and eggs dry, however useful in winter, in summer loses many a brood. Hence it is often advised to sprinkle the eggs daily with water in summer time, and we formerly always adopted this plan, but finding occasionally bad results follow it, careful examination showed, that in some circumstances (probably) chiefly depending on the hay (or straw) parasites so small as to be only distinguished by the microscope swarmed over the shells, and were probably the cause of the failures." * * * If we make a straw nest, our usual plan is to take the hen off about a week before hatching, and empty a full half pint of warm water over the nest and eggs, repeating this the third day after, and once more before the eggs are chipped. But all this refers only to dry weather; if not warm or dry, watering the ground is quite sufficient. Damping the eggs should always be done at night, in order that the hen may be immediately replaced on them."

We have already noticed the benefit to be derived from setting two hens at the same time in the case of sterile eggs. Another advantage to be gained is that all eggs under the same hen, owing to several cases, may not hatch out at the same time, all the unhatched eggs may then be given to one hen and the chickens to the other, which will be advantageous to both; the chickens in the one case will be better brooded, and in the other case the eggs better hatched. If all eggs set are fresh, of course the difference in hatching time will not be long, and this trouble may be obviated. It sometime happens that an egg may be cracked during the process of hatching, and, if valuable, some remedy should be adopted to preserve the chicken, if it appears that there is one in it. In such case paste a narrow slip of gummed paper over the crack, and the probability of hatching successfully is greatly in its favor. The last time the hen is taken off the nest, she ought to have a good feed of grain. She will then stay quiet during the time the chickens are hatching out. Occasionally the eggs should be examined, and the shells of them already hatched removed, and if any need assistance it should be given them. "We formerly," remarks Mr. Wright on this subject, "made many attempts at such assistance in vain, and like many others rushed to the conclusion that chicks could not be thus saved; but an accidental discovery put another face on the matter. Keep the egg in warm water (about 100 degrees) while the assistance is being rendered, and success may be hoped for. The shell must be cracked very gently, and the inner membrane very tenderly peeled off, till the chick be at liberty, keeping all but the beak under water till nearly clear. The operation must be performed in a warm place, and tenderly as if touching raw flesh; and it will be found that the water greatly facilitates matters, liberating the membrane if glued to the chick, and enabling it to be separated without loss of blood. The latter occurrence nine times out of ten is fatal, but if the operation be completed without blood flowing success may be anticipated, and the nearly dead chick may be put by the fire in flannel, or under the hen if a quiet good mother,

under her at night in any case, and next day may probably be as well as the others. We have latterly often saved chicks in this way, when before using the warm water we always failed; and when hatching eggs of first quality, any pains to save an extra bird are worth while."

Eggs by Weight.

The Legislature of Massachusetts has lately passed a law making it necessary that a dozen eggs weigh one and a half pounds. This is a move in the right direction, and we hope that all the other States may speedily follow the good example set by Massachusetts. It is annoying to the breeder of blooded and fine fowls to find, when he offers for sale eggs nearly twice as large as his neighbors, that they bring no more per dozen than do the smaller ones. Also, the consumer is often vexed to find that he must pay the same price to-day for a dozen eggs weighing but a pound that he yesterday paid for a dozen weighing a pound and a half. Besides, an egg from a well fed fowl is heavier and richer than an egg from a common fowl that is only half fed, so weight compared to size is a combination of richness. Thus, eggs of which eight will weigh a pound are better and richer than those of comparatively the same size of which ten are required for a pound. Of course, with eggs at three or four cents a dozen—and the writer of this has seen hundreds of dozens sold at these figures—it is not much matter as to the size; but when the prices range from twenty-five to sixty cents per dozen, it is a matter worth looking after. It is high time that this old style of selling and buying poultry and eggs by the piece should be discontinued. It is a relic of the past and reminds us of the time when dressed hogs sold for \$1 each, without regard to size or condition, and were a dull sale at that. Insist upon it, then, you who raise poultry for the market; insist upon it, then, you who have to buy eggs for consumption; insist upon it, all ye rich and poor, high and low, that eggs be sold for so much a pound. Then it will be some inducement for farmers to raise a better class of fowls, and all will get their just dues. Then the enterprising breeder and poultry fancier will receive the reward of his efforts to furnish a market fowl of good size and of such a degree of fatness that it shall be eatable, and the breeder of poor, half-starved specimens will no longer be his successful rival.—*Flint (Mich.) Globe*.

Dust Baths for Poultry.

Cleanliness is important in fowl-houses, for experience shows that poultry are unfavorably affected by the emanations from filthy quarters, and, besides, working in places where roosts and floors are covered with the droppings is decidedly unpleasant. Dry earth, in the form of powder, scattered everywhere, will absorb the bad odors, giving a wholesome atmosphere to the hen-house, and at the same time preserve the manure in the least offensive condition. Besides these purposes, a box of dry earth should be in a convenient corner of every fowl-house for the fowls to roll in. Dust from the highway is the most convenient. Replace the same by an equal quantity of good gravel, and the public will be the gainer.—*Live Stock Journal*.

HUGE EGG.—A Spanish hen, owned by Mr. Wakefield, of Westminster, has furnished that gentleman with a breakfast in the shape of an enormous egg. It measures in circumference 8½ inches by 6½ inches, and turns the balance easily at a quarter of a pound.

DOMINIQUE FOWLS.—The London *Field* says of this variety, which it denominates American:—

There are two or three useful and good breeds of poultry that are not well known in England. One of the oldest established, and certainly one of the most useful, is the Dominique. This breed more closely resembles our Cuckoo Dorking than any other English variety. It differs, however, in having only four toes—a great advantage, by the way, in a practical point of view—and in the legs being yellow. Each feather is of a very light gray, barred across with darker slaty-blue bars or pencillings. The Dominique cocks are showy birds, with full saddles and hackles, and abundant, well matched sickle feathers. They should weigh from six to eight pounds when mature. As table fowls, they should necessarily be short-legged, full-chested, and broad on the back. The ear lobes should be red, and the wattles and comb neat; the former of medium size. The merits of this breed will recommend them to persons residing in the country, as well worthy of promotion in the poultry-yard, whether as makers of eggs, or of meat; as sitters, or nurses, they are invaluable.