

Poultry Yard.

Poultry Notes.—No. 13

FATTENING.

If properly cared for and fed, nearly all chickens at the age of between three and four months will be, for all domestic uses, fat enough to kill, without having recourse to the fattening coop. But farmers who dispose of their surplus stock in the market will find a readier sale and correspondingly higher prices for fowls if well fattened. Somehow people will buy a fat fowl in preference to one with a corresponding amount of flesh but not so much fat, although the latter will be of little use except to fill a gizzard. It is therefore desirable to place chickens in the fattening pen occasionally for a few weeks before disposing of them, and it is desirable also to know the nature and quality of the food to be given, the manner of its administration, natural and artificial, and when so administered, either in a solid or semi-fluid state, the results likely to be most beneficial to the feeder. These are matters which have all been well considered and practically tested. Having in previous articles on this subject quoted the means adopted by several of the French feeders of note, it will be unnecessary to repeat them again; we cannot omit, however, drawing attention to the absolute necessity of strictly observing all the rules laid down while the fowls are in the fattening coop, if perfect success is sought for. Cleanliness and regularity in feeding must be observed throughout. The process of fattening may be divided into two kinds—natural and artificial. In England, as in this country, the natural process is that usually adopted, although artificial means are frequently used by poulterers near the great cities in England; but we are not aware that it is systematically adopted, as in France. In fattening by natural means the food recommended by English feeders, chiefly, we presume, by reason of its cheapness, is a mixture of barley-meal, oat-meal, or buckwheat-meal, with the husk sifted out, mixed with milk and made into the consistency of a dry, crumbly paste. This is fed three times a day, care being taken that only sufficient be given at a time to be eaten up clean, and none left, water being supplied at the same time. The artificial means is that adopted chiefly in France, and consists of two methods—one of cramming with solid food; the other, by means of funnelling, with the food in a semi fluid state. Mlle. Racinet affirms that the best food for fattening fowls is buckwheat-meal, bolted quite fine, kneaded up with sweet milk till it gets the consistency of bakers' dough, then cut into rations and made into rolls about the thickness of a woman's finger, and administered to the fowl in pellets of about two and a half inches long. On the other hand, it is stated by M. Jacque that the funnelling process, or cramming by means of a funnel, with farinaceous food in a liquid form, is, by reason of its simplicity, ease, and the rapidity with which it is performed, the quickest and best method to be adopted. He recommends barley-meal properly sifted, mixed in equal proportions of milk and water, and to be of the thickness of clear soup when it begins to boil; and this method would seem to be coming more and more into favor in France, and for years past the largest feeders of poultry have been using these machines, inasmuch as they are supposed to disturb and excite the fowl less, the whole meal being injected at one operation. Other minor improvements as regards the management of fattening fowls have from time to time been made, but the most perfect system yet developed appears to be that carried on at a town in France by M. Martin, where the method of procedure is so superior that a commission was appointed by an agricultural society, and its report published, on which Mr. Wright in his poultry book remarks as follows.—“The food

employed by M. Martin consists of fine maize and barley-meal, mixed in about equal quantities; to this is added a portion of lard; and the whole is then mixed smoothly with milk, so thin as to be almost liquid. The feeding house is a large, airy building on the summit of a hill, and is furnished with three revolving octagonal stands, which, as they turn within upright axes, present each side in succession to the operator, precisely in the same manner as the revolving show stands so often seen in shop windows. Each side of the stand contains five perches for the fowls, and as each perch roasts five birds, the stand accommodates two hundred fattening birds. The perches are arranged over each other, and under each perch is a board sloping backwards, which throws all the droppings into the centre of the machine, and effectually prevents them falling on the birds below. Every morning a little straw chaff is thrown upon them, and the whole taken away in a barrow running under, by which means the fowls are kept perfectly clean. The most peculiar thing about M. Martin's management, however, is the singular fact that the fowls are tied upon their perches by thongs of rawhide, which are passed round their feet, but leaving them otherwise at perfect liberty. Partitions or upright slabs fixed to the perches divide them from each other, and keep practically in separate compartments, with the great advantage of a free circulation of air. The whole apparatus is frequently disinfected with sulphate of iron, which keeps the birds perfectly free from vermin. The feeding is done by a machine which contains the food in a reservoir. The operator, who has a seat which he can vary in height, takes the head of a fowl in one hand, and with the other places down the gullet of the bird a nozzle fixed on the end of a flexible tube which reaches to the machine; by then pressing a treadle, a piston forces the proper quantity into the fowl's crop. A graduated dial regulates the quantity given, according to the age, size and stage of fattening of each bird. A slight push with the hand causes the frame to revolve so as to bring the next bird opposite the feeder, and the feeding is thus performed with such rapidity that one hour is sufficient for the entire two hundred birds. The Commission states that the fowls seemed to enjoy this novel mode of treatment, and that if any drops of the nearly fluid food fall accidentally upon the perches, they are eagerly pecked up by the eager birds. As soon as the fowls are ready for market they are hung up by the feet, a cloth passed round them to prevent struggling, and a small knife thrust into the throat. As soon as they are dead, they are plucked, washed, drawn, wrapt in wet cloths to cool rapidly, and placed on a stage that the blood may freely escape, on which the whiteness of the flesh depends. These arrangements, we quite agree with the Commission, are well worthy of consideration. It might be thought that the fowls would struggle violently on finding themselves fastened to the perches; but this is not the case if put on at night. The advantages in cleanliness and ventilation are very great, and it is found that the birds almost invariably thrive and fatten well. The Commission, in fact, express great surprise and satisfaction at the results achieved, and strongly recommend the adoption of M. Martin's system, which may be considered “the latest improvement as regards poultry fattening in France.”

In this country all kinds of grain are much cheaper than in England and France, except buckwheat, which with us is always scarce. Not so in France; buckwheat is a plentiful grain, and for this reason, as well as its being an excellent food for poultry, is extensively used. Corn-meal is always cheap with us; and by mixing with it a little of the other meals, will make an excellent food for fattening. If farmers were to apply a little more of their time and attention to the cultivation of poultry and the rearing and fattening of chickens for the market than

they do, they would find in it a useful and profitable employment for the female and junior members of their family. In France it is made a business of, and found to pay well; fattening and killing has been brought to a system, and at a show of dead poultry held in Paris in 1864, as much as £160 sterling was offered in prizes, and 2,000 head were exhibited. Poultry in France is considered as a part of the general economy of the farm, and poultry food enters into the farmer's rotation of crops. Large establishments exist, although nothing on so grand a scale as some poultry writers have announced; yet there are large poultry farms. Some years since M. Geyelin made a journey from England to France with the special object of procuring information in this respect, and found a poultry farm conducted by M. Manoury in Picardy, where about 5,000 head per annum were raised; and further information proves beyond a doubt that there are large numbers of farmers in France who raise for market their hundreds—a few their thousands—of poultry annually; that this item of farm produce is regarded by them as of the utmost importance and all connected with it assiduously cared for and looked after; and that in many departments it forms a large proportion of the whole agricultural trade. Even in the state of New York, we have an account lately published of a farm devoted exclusively to poultry, owned by a Mr. Warren Leland of New York, and fed out of the refuse from his tables, he being the proprietor of a large hotel in the city of New York. On this farm he rears annually a large number of fowls for the supply of his hotel, without the use of any artificial means save some fire heat in their roosting places during the severe part of the winter season. We must not be considered as advocating such a wholesale system as that pursued by M. Manoury of Picardy, or others nearly similar to it; but that each farmer could, without any additional cost by way of labor, produce annually a much larger number of fowls and eggs for market than he does, is beyond a doubt, and besides being a help, it would add to the production of the very best kind of meat.

The Apiary.

Seasonable Hints.

Swarming is late this year, owing to the general backwardness of the season. Those bee-keepers who have only box hives wherein the combs are fixtures are entirely dependent on the caprice of their stocks, both as to the time and manner of swarming. The time lost in watching for swarms to come off, and the loss, not to say mortification, experienced when one or more swarms go away to the woods, only require to be computed and a little common sense brought to bear on the result, to decide any wise bee-keeper to go into the use of movable frame hives.

We are quite willing to admit that there is more zest and enthusiasm among the bees when they swarm in the natural way, and that it takes a little while for them to accommodate themselves to the new order of things established by the art of man; but the same may be said of other creatures that have been subordinated to human use. The young horse has more zest and enthusiasm prancing in the pastures than he has when harnessed and put between the shafts of a cart or waggon, but the rule acted on is how to make him of most service to his lord and master, man. So with the bees.

We advise all who keep bees to put their new swarms into movable frame hives, and a week or ten days after swarming, to transfer the old stocks into movable comb hives also. How to do this may readily be learnt from the bee books, one or more of which ought to be in the hands of every bee-keeper. This is the season for using the extractor. While