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DEVOTED TO A POULTRY, IN ALL ITS BRANCHES

For the FANCIER, the FARMER, and the SMALL BREEDER.

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POULTRY FARMING IN FRANCE.

FRENCH GEESE.

BY EDWARD CONNER, PARIS, FRANCE.

GEESE are bred in France mostly for their feathers, their livers and their flesh. Their bill is as long as their head; in the case of ducks this is less so. The body is also more in equilibrium, hence they swim more at ease, but plunge with greater difficulty. Their march is more rapid, and less rolling than that of the duck. They are not so aquatic either as ducks—though many of the large duck farms in the United States have no water accommodation at all. Geese like marshes and banks of rivers, and eat the tender shoots of weeds, etc. They are cleaner feeders than ducks and are, indeed, in this point of comparison, vegetarians; ducks devour every kind of detritus, hence their flesh too often reflects their food. Being able to fly higher, though slower than ducks, their migration can go far. Even in a wild state, geese are sociable, as they live in small groups, and in ordinary life the ganders do not quarrel though living together. Good geese ought to have a decided gait and a lively eye. They are not so stupid as generally believed; they know and become attached to their masters, and in those parts of France where they are reared in flocks, as in Alsace and the valley of the Garonne, they assemble and march to the sound of a horn or trumpet, to be conducted to graze as well as to be led home. The vigilance of geese is proverbial; the least surprise induces them to utter piercing screams; the gander is very courageous, whistles like a serpent while trying to strike with bill and wing.

The brilliant whiteness of geese induced the Greek poets to find in them a simile for young girls. The Egyptians deified the goose, and named a city after the bird. For a time the goose was sacred with the Romans, since its screaming saved the Capitol from the Barbarians; in time, they preferred its gastronomic value, and the Gauls sent from Picardy every year, flocks of geese across France, and over the Alps, down into Italy.

Till the introduction of the more delicate turkey, geese were the favourite table birds at banquets and festivals. In the middle ages a new profession came into existence, that of poulterers selling also roasted geese. The flesh, the most important product, is close grained, and nutritive; it is savoury, though heavy, but in any case is welcomed by robust stomachs. Geese are largely consumed in France to-day, but yet not so extensively as in England. The turkey, though possessing a very appetizing and fine flesh, is not accorded the first place at very select dinner parties, that honor is reserved for a good capon. There are two very distinct varieties of geese in France; the common breed and peculiar to the central regions of the country, is small, and when not wholly white, is white and grey. The Toulouse goose, the second variety, is very large, low breasted, walks with difficulty, and seems to indicate it has been hatched to grow rapidly, and yield a large liver. With ordinary attention, the farming of geese is not difficult, it is profitable, and ever more so, if the rearer has plenty of grass and marsh land to allow the birds to roam over. The gander is generally allowed six females—double the number the Romans allotted. For breeding purposes, the gander can be useful at seven months, but will be in his prime at twelve. As goose eggs are