Importance of Detail.

Frequently the lack of success with poultry is due to the failure, on the part of the owner, to observe some detail which is apparently a trifle. For example, this interesting case came to my notice: A stone mason, who got the chicken fever at a poultry show, decided to start with a few nicely-laced Silver Wyandottes. As he intended to build his own henhouse, and understood stone better than wood, he built it with 18-inch stone wall, putting up 2x2 strips on the inside, and lathing and plastering it so as to furnish a dead-air space. When winter set in the walls were covered with frost, and his blooded chickens began to have bad colds and roup. His friends told him that the stone wall was the cause of his trouble, and that nothing but wooden houses would do for chickens. It chanced that the house had a gable roof, and in order to have a dead-air space above he had put in a pine-board ceiling, on a level with the top of the stone wall. An old poultryman, to whom he told his troubles, advised him to cut a hole through this ceiling and establish an upward current of air, as the moisture, he said, came from the breath of the fowls, which, as everyone has noticed, rises upward, the faster the colder the air is. He cut a hole through the ceiling and placed a stovepipe over it, which he passed through the roof. He has had no colds nor roup since, and the henhouse has proved the most satisfactory in his neighborhood, as the heavy stone wall makes it, to a considerable degree, independent of the outside temperature. It is not easily influenced by a sudden drop in the temperature in winter, and in summer when other fowls roost with wings spread and panting for breath, his are spending a cool, agreeable night. For three years there has not been a day when he has failed to get eggs, and he gets the smallest number in the summer, when part of his hens are sitting and raising chicks. The hole in the ceiling has made all the difference between a failure and a phenomenal success.

In a poultry journal recently, I read a letter, received by the editor, from a farmer who had purchased stock from an established breeder of pure-bred Barred Plymouth Rocks. He had provided a good house for them, and kept them in it during the cold weather. He had fed them well and given them every chance, he thought, and yet his neighbor, with a flock of scrubs, got three eggs to his one. He stated that the scrubs ran about the barnyards and had to hustle for their own living, while his were carefully provided for. If his Barred Rocks had had to do the hustling which he so kindly saved them from, the egg record would have been in their favor.

In making their calculations, some people leave out the most important detail, while others pass judgment because of an unimportant one. An American, in commenting on the laying contest recently ended, in London, England, observes that the first six pens, in order of their egg records, were white birds, and the seventh Buff. He comes to the conclusion that birds of one color are likely to be better layers than parti-colored varieties. He fails to observe that the contest was arranged by members of the Utility Club, an organization which is endeavoring to counteract the English tendency to become so much interested in the struggle for supremacy in the show-room as to care nothing about utility qualities, especially as many of the most prominent fanciers are men of wealth, who go into the fancy for sport, and often spend more money on it than they get out of it. The varieties which happen to be in favor with the English Utility Club are the White Leghorn, the White Wyandotte and Buff Orpington, and, of course, they led in the contest, as the parti-colored birds matched against them were bred by parties who had given less attention to the laying qualities of their fowls. A pen of 13 Barred Rocks, of one of the most famous show strains, whose laying I have watched this summer, are keeping abreast of the best. At one time, for several days in succession, the 13 hens laid 13 eggs a day. On a poultry farm, laying record of which I know, the Silver Wyandottes are leading. The varieties raised are Silver Wyandottes, White Wyandottes, Black Wyandottes and Buff Orpingtons. The parti-colored birds are leading the three solid-colored varieties, while on another farm, which raises White Wyandottes, Buff Wyandottes, Silver Wyandottes and Golden Wyandottes, the laying records stand in the order which the varieties are named. The two solid-covered varieties are ahead of the parti-colored varieties. In handling poultry, or in making judgments with reference to it, the omission of a small detail may lead to a big blunder. For this reason it will probably take a long while to convince people that so far as eggs are concerned, the breeding is more than the breed, though the latter is not to be ignored.

W. I. T.

The cockerels should be sold in the early fall. Unless they are housed in the fields, and consequently require little attention, the most profitable age for marketing is four months; when kept until six or seven months old the profits are materially reduced by the increased cost of gain per pound.

APIARY

Winter Preparations with the Case System.

In an address last November before the Ontario Beekeepers' Association, Mr. A. E. Hoshal, of Lincoln County, outlined a season's work for the benefit of amateur beekeepers. He said, in part, illustrating his remarks here and there with an exhibition of utensils:

"When September comes, if your colony is weak, confine them to one case*, but if there is a good strong colony it will do no harm to leave them with two. For storage room it is all right to leave it on, but for myself, I would as soon keep it as a surplus case. Take the honey out of it and confine them down to one case. I extract in July, and take my honey all off except what is necessary to keep them from starvation in August.

"The next in order is the preparation for winter. If I have any uniting to do I do it in July, just as soon as the honey flow is over. Do it at once. Don't wait. I simply do it by piling one hive on top of the other. I do not care if the bees fight each other or not; it is brood I am after, not the bees. I do not pick the strongest colonies to keep through the winter, but I pick colonies with the best brood. The old bees are of no particular use to you at that time of the year, but the brood is. The brood hatches and gives your colony.

"It is now the middle of September, and we will say you are ready for the winter. Here is your hive—a double-case one. That hive, in order to go through the winter, must weigh not less than fifty pounds in all; but if it weighs more than that it is better. I often winter on fifty, but I prefer fifty-five or sixty. With the single case they must not weigh less than forty

Fall Wheat is Not the Only Crop in Sunny Alberta.

pounds, and as much more as you can make them. I have a simple pair of platform scales that I put on the wheelbarrow and take out to the yard. Now, a single case with bees, empty combs and all, weighs seventeen pounds; a double case with bees, combs and all, weighs twenty-five pounds. Everything over that is honey. If they are lacking in stores, and you have not the combs of filled honey to give them, it becomes necessary to feed them, and for that purpose we use a feeder like the following. The feed is syrup made from granulated sugar and water, one pound of granulated sugar and one quart of water, brought to a boil. This is all we do. Here is a board with a hole in it, and a block to cover it. We take off the cover of the hive, and put that on. My feeder is made with a little piece of perforated tin in the top of a glass gem jar. The jar is inverted over the hole. You perhaps think the water in the jar will run out when inverted, but it will not.

"Now, the preparation for wintering outside itself. We come back to the wintering case. It fits the stand which the hive stands on. Pick up your hive, and put it on to it and pack it underneath. That done, we put in a bridge, keeping the entrance from being closed, and the case is put on. Snugly pack it all around the sides. You will notice this cover has a hole in it. Here is another arrangement that has a hole through it, and a hole in the bottom of it with a screen over it. This is placed on the cover so that the opening in this comes over the opening in the cover. The ends of this communicate with an opening in the side of the case. There is your ventilator, and you put your packing right in through the whole thing. It is not to furnish pure air that we put that ventilator on, it is a matter of dryness. Where we use the single case we use this form of ventilator.

"When the spring arrives, along in March, as soon as it is warm weather—after St. Patrick's Day any time—these ventilators are removed, and the entrances closed up to about half an inch with the entrance blocks, because, if at any time of the year robbers are going to be disastrous, or do harm, it is in the early spring. As the season advances, and the bloom starts to come out, they begin to be crowded, and you can spread those blocks, and as it goes on further you can take them out entirely, and let them go until the last of May or first of June, until you come to the point where we started. In the spring leave your bees severely alone. Provide them with good queens in July, and see they have abundant stores in September, and that they are thoroughly packed and kept warm."

Q. What kind of packing would you use?

A. Sawdust, chaff, cut hay or dry leaves.

Q. You recommend bringing the syrup to a boil. Is it not sufficient to know that the sugar is all dissolved?

A. Certainly, but to make sure of it I recommend boiling.

"I was one who lost heavily in wintering last season. Now, if you ask me how to winter outside, I will tell you plainly that I do not know how. I will tell you some things I went through this last winter, and which I took occasion to find out. I have had a suspicion for a long while that moisture in the hive very often, particularly in cold weather, was detrimental to the good wintering of bees outside; that they had to be kept dry. I experimented along that line for some five, six or seven years, but I could never find a winter suitable for experimenting. But I used this ventilator. I could not strike a winter that would put the things to a test. During that time when I was packing there were some outsiders that came into my yard and stole the idea from me, and went away and fixed theirs up that way. Last fall I was in a little bit of a hurry, and did not put my ventilators on to try it. Some of the people who had been to my place and taken this idea, and had the ventilator on, found that their bees went through, while mine went under. Mr. Jones, we will call him, had twenty colonies of bees. Out of those twenty he sold six or seven to another man about half a mile away. This other man took them home, and lost every one of them. They were shut up tight. The other fellow who had them there, and had my ventilators on like this, using a Hedden hive which was rigged up, carried his through without a single loss.

"Another thing, this man said he had to keep these ventilators open, because they would freeze shut. I went to another man not half a mile from me, and half of his bees went under and the other half came out. He had about seventeen colonies; he had ten in movable frame hives and the others were in common box hives, warped up with the sun, cracked open, and everything else. Every one of his new hives went under. The old ones, riddled and split by the sun, and so on, came through. Another man, not over five miles from me, with the Hedden hive, etc., never packed his bees at all in the double case, but set them in the open, right in a fence corner, with the honey board on, and loose covers, and they came through in the very best condition. In carrying out the same idea, I wintered quite a percentage of my bees in the cellar. Unfortunately, last winter, or near the spring, the drain of the cellar froze, so that during the night the cellar flooded and submerged the lower row of hives right around. You would naturally suppose those bees would all come out dead. They did not; they lived through the ordeal, to my own surprise. The combs were thoroughly soaked when I went to take them out of the cellar, and I didn't expect to find one of them alive, and was much surprised to find half of them living. I put them outside and they only survived about a week after they got out. Another thing in this wintering question: If you will follow it up, and look over those that have gone under—colony after colony, you will find that every one you looked at, without an exception, showed signs of being wet inside, and that wet never got there from the outside."

*In a previous portion of his address, Mr. Hoshal had explained that there were three systems of beekeeping—the box-hive system, movable-frame system, and the case system. By the case system is meant a system by which, instead of manipulating combs, we manipulate cases to accomplish the different objects desired. A case is built usually with frames, and everything in it is solid. Mr. Hoshal uses the case system, and his remarks apply to it throughout.