

Artificial Rearing of Domestic Fowls.

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The chicks soon showed me how sensible they were of the merits of this artificial mother. They loved to remain under it, where they were warmer than anywhere else, and to press it very close. When they had taken their meals, they ran and capered about, and as they began to be tired or to be no longer warm enough, they repaired under this mother, and went so deep into it that they could not do otherwise than squat upon their belly; and when this artificial mother was taken up I saw the impression of the back of several chickens sensibly marked in the fur lining.

The breadth of this artificial mother is determined by that of the chicken house, into which it must be introduced with ease. Its breadth or depth is arbitrary, and must be proportioned to the number of chickens you are willing it should contain. I made it fifteen inches, which is sufficient for fifty or sixty very young chicks. The age of those who are to be covered and kept warm there requires that one should have many of these mothers, some higher, some lower at the entrance and at the bottom of the chicken house, for it is proper to have a variety of them for the chickens that differ much from each other in point of shape.

The small timber work of this mother consists in the wooden frame, which is the roof of it. This frame leaves a plianthness in the fur now stretched upon the interior surface of it, which it would not have if that roof was a board. It rests upon four feet, the two hinder ones of which are very short; two inches is a sufficient height for them. The two fore feet must be but four inches high if the box is designed for new hatched chicks, and they are made higher when intended for older ones; in which case the hinder feet are also to be made higher in proportion. It was with a lamb skin, garnished with good long wool, that I caused the inside of the artificial mother to be lined, and I caused a curtain to be put to the fore part of the mothers; this being let down at night when the heat of the cavity seemed not to be over and above strong; it tended to make the chicks pass the night with greater warmth and comfort.

You make yourself sure of the heat that reigns in this furred lodge as you make yourself sure of the heat of the ovens, that is by the thermometer. It is not of such importance to know the excessive heat with such exactness as it is to know the heat for hatching the eggs. When the little ones are too warm under the mother, they know very well how to go from it, to spread about the chicken

house, or to go and flock together at the more temperate end of it. There is no natural mother that can do the little chickens so much good as the artificial one; they are not long without knowing the value of it, and after contracting a kind of fondness for it; instinct is a quick and sure director to the animals who have no other guide, as it teaches them what they ought to love and seek for. Chickens drawn out of the oven twenty-four hours after their birth, and put into the chicken house will, of their own accord begin to pick up and swallow the small grains or crumbs of bread which are laid before them, and after they have eaten and walked about for some time, they generally, of their own accord, find the fleecy lodge under which they go to warm and rest themselves, and they remain there till the want of eating, or a desire of stirring, puts them in motion again. All in the chicken house never fail to go under the mother at night, and they have it exactly at break of day. If you procure them a seeming day before the rising of the sun, by bringing a light near the chicken house, they come out and pick up the remainder of the food they have left. They in that case want to eat at hours when the hens would not be hungry, and are more easy to be waked and put in motion. Hens kept in the same place where the chicken houses are, remain quiet at the approach of the light that causes all the chickens to move. This I have experienced a number of times.

It is an advantage to the little chicks not to live with any but those that are nearly of the same age with them; the new born ones suffer much and run some hazard when they have for their companions brisker chickens that have already acquired some vigour: they often overthrow and tread upon them to gain their ends. Lively chickens that follow each other, and continue thus to tread on the one that has been thrown down, and which is now upon its back with its legs upwards, make it altogether impossible for him to rise again, and he is often killed by this sort of treatment in a very little time. At meal time the weakest have nothing but what the strongest are pleased to leave them, these very often possess themselves of the best places under the mother, which the others are the worse for disputing with them.

When the little chicks have dwelt seven or eight days in the first chicken house, and are grown strong enough not to have anything to fear from other chickens, as for instance, chickens a fortnight or three weeks old, I lodge them in company with those in the second chicken house till they are about a month old, and then I convey them into the third. This is more spacious, and I distinguish it from the other two by calling it the weaning house. It is twice as broad as the two other chicken houses, and its height or depth is