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Poultry Chat

Written for The Western Home Monthly by H. E. Vialoux

'Twas an ideal sunny day in January when I spent an afternoon seeing the many interesting features and experiments that are being carried on under the supervision of Prof. Herner at St.

After looking over the egg laying record of 350 trapnested Leghorn and Barred Rock pullets, half in laying houses where the electric light is turned on until10.30 p.m., and the other half in houses without any light. I must confess that the use of electric light in winter increases egg production nearly 50 per cent. No ill results have followed the use of electric light in the poultry houses at the college. The hens work longer hours, digest another meal and lay more eggs daily.

Certainly switching on the light is far ahead of the smoky lantern hanging in the hen house to temper a bitter night, though the light is only used at the Manitoba Agricultural College to lengthen the day for the hen. Some Winnipeg poultry men claim that a rise in temperature of several degrees, 15 to 20 degrees at least, takes place in a small hen house where a powerful electric light is installed. This should tide the hens over many a cold dip in January. Prof. Herner showed me one beautiful Barred Rock pullet that is making a record for herself despite her blue blood and perfect feathering. She has laid pretty steadily since the 8th of September, when she was five months old, producing 67 eggs by

The White Leghorn pullets have done remarkably well this season, but this pullet has beaten them all. There are about a dozen hens on the plant with a 200 egg record per year, and the professor is keen on increased egg production from utility fowl, but has a vision of raising birds combining fine feathering with heavy egg production. The fowls at the College have produced more eggs than usual all this season though they felt the dreadfully sudden cold days in early January very much and dropped off in laying a good deal, in common with all of our flocks. When the weather gradually turns very cold laying hens do not seem to mind the change, but when the thermometer suddenly drops from 10 above zero to 30 below in 30 hours as it did at New Year's all feathered fowl feel out of sorts at once, and who can blame them.

The experiment that Professor Herner is trying this season in breeding up 150 mongrel hens by mating them with purebred Barred Rock males for five seasons will prove interesting to many farmers am sure, and induce them to use purebred males in building up the farm flock. This experiment I have tried some years light room. ago in a small way, and in three or four seasons the hens had improved wonderfully and were well barred. The 150 hens should demonstrate the value of good breeding very clearly, and I understand this experiment is the first to be tried in America on a large scale. The 150 mongrels looked fine and were cackling to themselves about winter laying when I saw them in a comfortable laying house of cheap construction,

single boarded only. The idea is that mongrels laying perhaps 75 to 100 eggs annually can be bred up into a good laying strain producing 150 to 200 eggs a year. The method of feeding is the same as other flocks, scratch feed in litter twice a day, dry mash of crushed oats, bran and corn in the hoppers also plenty of cabbage, mangels or other roots, and buttermilk to drink as well as water.

Ducks, turkeys and geese will be hatched and raised more extensively in 1919 than in former years at St. Vital. I am told White Holland turkeys are proving very satisfactory and are not so subject to blackhead as their bronze Twenty turkey hens are in the

A Writer's Jaunt to the Poultry Plant breeding pens and they will no doubt give at the Manitoba Agricultural College a good account of themselves during the spring season.

> After a pleasant saunter through the poultry plant the hatching room down in the basement was visited. Here there are several makes of incubators in readiness for the hatching season, but the most interesting thing to me was the Mammoth Buckeye incubator which has a capacity of 2440 eggs, and takes up the centre of the hatching room. "Jumbo" is heated by a coal oil stove not by electric power, owing to the uncertainty of the lighting plant at the College. The system of ventilation in the big machine is perfect, fresh air circulates around the egg chamber constantly by means of a sort of electric fan. This machine has turned out a splendid hatcher, over 1300 chicks were hatched in it last summer.

The straw house used a good deal on western farms is in use for experimental work this winter. It is built of bales of straw, has an earthen floor covered with litter of straw and cotton and glass windows. The house is comfortable enough, but much too damp and not as light and cheery as it should be. However, some of the White Leghorns housed in this novel structure are laying at present. The roosts are just poles put up ladder style, and the idea is to clean it only once a year in real farmer fashion. The result of wintering fowls thus will be carefully noted and put on record. Some geese occupy a straw pen also, and they seem to be doing very well, and have laid a couple of eggs already.

"Jumbo" was being made ready for rhe first hatch to be set on January 17th, so the baby chicks will be on view at the big Winnipeg Poultry Show, February 7th to 15th, at the Industrial Bureau. They will form an interesting exhibit and the wee chicks will be for sale during show week. As usual the exhibit from the College will be large and full of interesting features.

A row of little wire cages or boxes on a shelf in the hatching room turned out to be special receptacles for precious purebred eggs laid by 200-egg record hens that must be kept separate from the ordinary eggs throughout the hatch. When the chicks are hatched tiny leg bands are clasped on their legs as they are let out of their wire prisons to mingle with the common herd of baby chicks. The egg show at the Winnipeg Poultry Show will be larger than usual this year, and poultry entries are pouring into the secretary, Mr. McArthur. The show will be staged in the big auditorium at the Bureau, everything from a bantam to an ostrich will be proudly displayed in this splendid

The Birds' Valentines

By Laura Spencer Portor

The winter day is waning, The maples all are bare; I see the snowflakes drifting Down softly through the air. The redbird sits there singing From his bough among the pines: "These are not snowflakes, deary, But snowbirds' valentines. And lest you cannot read them, I thought I heard him say, "These are the words the little birds

Send to their loves to-day: 'My love for thee none knows! "Tis hid in winter snows. But when the brooks are flowing, And all the grass is growing, And chilly winter goes, Upon the warm earth's bosom My love shall blossom, blossom

In the violet and the rose.'

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