



GOOSE BREEDING.

BY CHAS. O. FLAGG.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—We are indebted to Mr. A. A. Brigham, Ph.D., director of the Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station, for advance proofs of this most valuable and comprehensive article on Goose Culture, and also for procuring for us duplicates of some of the engravings to be used in connection with the Report. The copies of REVIEW containing this series of articles should be carefully preserved for future guidance. The first part appeared in November REVIEW.

GOOSE are peculiar, in that both sexes are feathered exactly alike. Consequently there is considerable difficulty in distinguishing ganders from geese, especially when young. Some experienced breeders determine the sexes by the difference in the voice, but that is knowledge gained only by considerable acquaintance with geese. The form, size, length of neck, and size of the head, is some indication as they approach maturity, the gander being heavier, with a longer neck and larger head than the goose. A critical examination of each bird is a pretty sure method, but even this fails at times when made by a novice. On this subject Bailey says, "much difficulty is often experienced in selecting the sexes, and although practiced men are seldom mistaken, yet even they can lay down no rule that is easy to follow. Close examination may always be depended upon, but that is not easy to the uninitiated. There is a curious plan adopted in Cambridgeshire. All the geese are shut in a stable or a pig-stye, a small dog is then put in. It is said, and we believe with truth, the geese will all lift up their heads and go to the back of the place, while the ganders will lower and stretch out their necks, hissing all the time."

Before the days of steam or furnace heated houses and coiled spring mattresses, live geese feathers were a more important item and commanded a higher price than at present, and the fact that the breeding birds could be plucked from one to three or more times a season was an inducement to the keeping of geese which has very little force now. Comparatively few men pick any geese alive as in former days. The feathers obtained from the goslings fattened and killed for market are quite a source of income to the large dealer, as a good gosling will yield about enough feathers at present prices to pay the cost of picking.

Geese are less liable to disease than any other domestic fowl, which, possibly, may account in some measure for their generally long life. Goslings well hatched are seldom lost, except through accident or exposure to hard storms while still very young.

From the characteristics enumerated it is easily seen that the business of goose raising is of necessity somewhat restricted. It cannot be conducted in such a wholesale concentrated manner as is duck raising at the present time. The relatively large number of males required, the exclusiveness of the gander and his mates, the comparative large amount of range necessary for the breeding stock, and their aversion to close confinement, are some of the reasons why very large numbers cannot profitably be kept together. For the above reasons the business of goose breeding is never likely to be monopolized by a few breeders on a grand scale, but is likely always to remain in the hands of the many farmers who have low lying lands along brooks, rivers, and ponds, which, while comparatively worthless for other purposes, furnish ideal conditions for successful goose breeding.

VARIETIES.

Many geese are kept which are of no particular breed, having descended from the importations made by the early settlers. They have probably been more or less crossed with the improved breeds during the last fifty years, but present no fixed colors aside from white, gray, or particolored, nor special type of body. Of the breeds usually met with, Toulouse is probably most common, and African and Embden share with it the honor of being popular breeds. Brown and white China, as pure breeds, are not so popular unless for ornamental purposes, the Canada goose is bred pure to furnish a supply of ganders for the breeding of