



A class of instruction in the fattening, etc., of poultry, and in the grading and packing of eggs

Agriculture in Ireland—No. 3

By the Hon. JOHN DRYDEN

In a country like Ireland, where in many parts the farms or holdings, as they are called here, are very small, in some sections the average reaching not more than twenty acres while in some parts not more than five, it is manifest that the particular branch which could and probably would be common to all, is poultry raising. Besides, the farmers, small and large, it is carried on by the resident laborer—the herd or foreman—and as well by many people living in towns. It was, therefore, natural and eminently befitting that an effort to improve the output of eggs and fowl for the table should be among the first to occupy the attention of the authorities in the Department of Agriculture soon after its organization. In many places new blood was greatly needed.

THE OLD IRISH FOWL

had been bred for so many years in and in without the introduction of any new blood, that weakness of constitution and disease followed as a natural result. The quality of the eggs was poor, and the output was very small also. The care given in many cases only added to this tendency, so that I am safe in saying that the introduction of better varieties, as well as better treatment, is now acknowledged all over Ireland to be a very great blessing. Different schemes for the improvement of this industry have been put into operation, but the first one I shall describe, and the one common to all the country, except in one county, is the establishment of what are familiarly known here as

EGG STATIONS.

In this matter as in nearly all the agricultural work carried on here, the county authorities work in conjunc-

tion with the officials of the department. Each county elects by popular vote a council. This body appoints partly from its own membership and partly from the citizens outside what is called an agricultural committee. These committees select the individuals who are appointed to manage the egg stations. Each individual on his acceptance of the position is required to dispose of any mixed breeds of fowl hitherto kept on the premises. He is then subject to rigid inspection by some one of the officers of the department, as to buildings, yards and care, the object being to maintain the health of the birds selected, and also to make certain that they are typical birds of the breed selected. The manager of this station undertakes on his part to sell to his neighbors seventy dozen eggs for hatching purposes, and when he can show by his books that the above number has been so disposed of at the rate of one shilling per setting he is entitled to the grant of £5 from the department. Any eggs over this number are his own property, and may be dealt with in any manner which he decides. In order that no mistake can be made as to the age of the eggs, he is required by a rubber stamp to impress the day of laying on each egg, and keep in the book supplied an accurate account.

BREEDS OF FOWL RECOMMENDED.

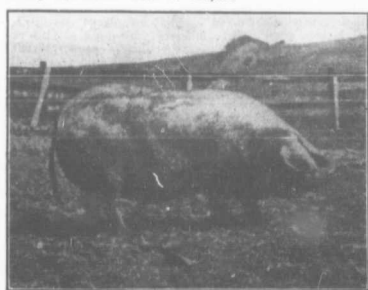
This scheme is common to all parts of Ireland, in some sections the setting breeds being chosen, and in others the general purpose sorts. The department limit the choice of non-setting breeds to White and Brown Leghorns and Black Minorcas, and

the general purpose breeds to (Barred) Plymouth Rocks, Buff Orpingtons, White Wyandottes, Houdans, Sussex and Gannon Flavorelles.

In most places where this scheme is in operation the county committee make an appointment of an itinerant instructor, who travels from point to point holding meetings, delivering lectures, affording private instruction and generally stirring the people up to take an interest in the scheme set at work. Inasmuch as the majority of the poultry are cared for by the women in Ireland, the instructor is in nearly every case a lady, who has taken the course prescribed, and is in the judgment of the officials entirely qualified for the work assigned to her. The instructor is essential to the complete working out of the scheme, becoming, as it were, a travelling advertisement, as well as the giver of all kinds of advice and information relating to the selection or care of poultry. In any section where the people show an inclination towards obtaining the needed knowledge rapid progress is made towards improvement. In most of the counties what are called poultry classes are formed where definite instruction is given from the care of the young chicken to trussing and marketing the fowls. In this case the instructor remains for a considerable time in one section, completing the course of instruction, and then moves on to another point, where the same thing is repeated. By the egg station scheme the poorest in the land can secure a better breed, and with the instruction can learn the latest and best methods for the care of them.

THE PRACTICAL RESULT

is that fowls of the most approved breeds are by this arrangement being rapidly scattered over every part of Ireland. The best information obtained goes to show that already the eggs marketed have increased perceptibly in size and uniformity, cleanliness and proper packing are also noticeable everywhere, while the quality of the table fowls is the subject of favorable comment in many sections. All classes unite in saying that the work in connection with poultry raising is of great value. In connection with this scheme and accompanying it in many sections, is seen an effort to improve the turkeys. This is not done in the same manner as the hens, but rather by the introduction of male birds of the American bronze variety to be crossed on the variety in common use. In some sections I am told that already the size has considerably increased, and an



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