

formed, the sleet then freezes and forms a crust and imprisons or starves the birds, and in this way many perish. In the spring the melting of the snow exposes to view the remains of bones and feathers. There is little else to note about their bush life or winter life. By spring many of the birds, by continually pulling off frozen browse, have so worn their bills when closed there is still a large opening right through near the end.

About the middle of April, although reduced in number since their entry on bush life, those who remain, the survival of the fittest, once more spread over the prairies, at first in flocks, but soon to disperse to enter on their duties of reproduction.

There is another matter that I would like to refer to, but can only do so at present very briefly, and that is the prairie chicken's fitness for domestication. To what extent the stock of poultry on a farm in this country may be increased, is a subject worthy of consideration. Our farmers require a fowl which have no delicate appendages like combs, wattles, etc., but which has its legs and feet well protected by feathers, and will be able to withstand a great degree of cold. The abundance of hawks renders it desirable that the bird be not glaringly bright in color like some of the common fowls. The prairie chicken seems to me worthy of a trial, as it has many of the qualities which are wanting in that of the common fowl, and in addition it has the merit of maturing early and rapidly. In ten weeks a prairie chicken is full grown, while a common fowl takes thrice as long. The grouse weigh only about two pounds, yet it yields more nutritive food for man than a 3½ or 4 lb. domestic chicken, and it can fatten on food that the domestic chicken will not touch, and can take at one meal sufficient to last a whole day if necessary, such is the size of its crop. I am not positive, with my personal experience, that it can be domesticated, but it is worth trying. I know of one instance where a chicken was kept for six months, but at the end was as wild as ever, but then it was caught when full grown.

Audubon tamed the pinnated grouse

with little trouble, and Wilson was successful with the quail. The eggs of eggs laid would doubtless increase they were cautiously removed, though I confess I found them rather suspicious for on taking 6 eggs out of a nest the rest were deserted. The 6 eggs were hatched by a hen, but earlier than her own, and I found the young had crushed. Wilson says that all attempts to raise the young have failed for want of proper food. Perhaps he is right. From what little I know of the raising pheasants in the old country from the situation of the prairie chicken nests, I think their young could be successfully raised in a pen with dry sandy soil and a few of ant hills and rose bushes. And ant eggs are the best food for them.

The flesh of the prairie chicken is most delicate flavor, but this is lost in domestication.

So long as the prairie chicken is abundant in their wild state it is unlikely that farmers will try to domesticate them, but with the anticipated immigration it is just possible they may not be so abundant in a few years. I think that the experiment is worth trying, however, and if any member of the Historical Society is inclined to take the trouble I will endeavor to find the necessary stock to start with.

COMMENTS.

The reading of the paper was followed by a discussion in which several members took part. The chairman spoke of the impossibility of domesticating the grouse of Eastern Canada, commonly known as the "partridge," and that the same trouble would be found with the prairie grouse. Mr. C. N. Bell referred to the territory over which a variety is found, spreading as far as the Rocky Mountains. Dr. Agnew cited one or two of the theories of Seton. He was also of the opinion that the bird could not be domesticated. After some further discussion a vote of thanks was given to Mr. Seton, seconded by Dr. Agnew and carried. On motion of Mr. Mr. Bell, a vote of thanks was also tendered to Mr. McKillegan for the paper.