



### Rearing Ducks for the Table.

In convenient situations no more useful and acceptable birds can be raised for table use than ducks, nor can any be procured that will yield larger profitable returns, provided they are properly managed. Generally speaking, however, ducks are very injudiciously attended to, when they yield very unsatisfactory returns.

With regard to the variety that should be kept, two circumstances have to be considered. If large size, early maturity, and white appearance for the market are required, the Aylesbury will be found pre-eminent. If, on the other hand, small size with a strongly pronounced suspicion of wild duck is required—a bird that can be eaten with cayenne and lemon juice without the addition of the conventional sage and onion—then commend me to a smaller variety, as the small black, called with equal inaccuracy East Indian, Buenos Ayres, and Labrador, or, still better, the tame-bred wild, or a cross between the two; but for family use Aylesburies must be relied on.

The great error in the usual management of ducks is not bringing them to rapid maturity. A duck should be so fed as to be large enough to kill under ten weeks old. If it is allowed to live longer, it begins to moult, and consequently is not so good in flavor, and the nourishment given to it goes to form feathers, and not to increase its weight. It is obvious that if one duck can be made ready for the market in two months, it must yield a larger profit than another that is not fit for use until it is four or six.

The Messrs. Fowler have issued a letter on the management of these ducks. With regard to the importance of the trade, they state:

"Often times in the spring, in one night, a ton weight of ducklings, from six to eight weeks old, is taken from Aylesbury and the villages round about, by rail, to the metropolis. They are gen-

erally not killed till between seven and eight weeks old, when good birds will be about 4lb. weight each. Prices vary considerably during the season—from 18s. to a guinea a couple being obtainable; the latter price they sometimes reach towards the middle of March and the beginning of May; then they decline gradually in value till July, after which there is but little demand. It has been computed that upwards of \$30,000 per annum is paid into the town and neighborhood for this early delicacy."

The ducks should be always shut up during the night, as they generally lay at that time, and, if allowed to be at large, drop their eggs in the water, when they sink and are lost. As early as possible in the season, they should be set under large hens. A good-sized Cochins, Brahma, or Dorking will cover a dozen or thirteen. The hens should not be set in the crowded, vermin-infested nest places that are usually seen in fowl houses, but on the ground or in a circular basket or American cheese box, nearly filled with moist earth, and covered with a very little bruised straw, not hay; this earth should be kept moist during the whole time of setting, so as to imitate the conditions of the nest in a state of nature.

The young should be hatched on the twentieth day, that is, the same day of the week one month after they are placed under the hen.

In Messrs. Fowler's directions they say:

"When the young are hatched they should be left with the hen till well nestled, well dried, and strong enough to stand. Many scores of ducklings are lost by inexperienced persons through their impatience to remove them from the nest. The little duckling is at first clad with soft yellow down, which gradually disappears as the feathers grow. After a few days three or four broods are put together with one hen, which is quite able to take care of them all. For market purposes the treatment of the ducklings is as follows: They are not allowed to go into any water, but are kept in hovels, or the rooms of cottages, each lot of thirty or forty separated by low boards; it is no uncommon thing to see two thousand to three thousand all in one establishment. They are kept very clean and dry on barley straw. Their food consists of hard-boiled eggs chopped fine, and mixed with boiled rice and bullock's liver cut up small. This is given to them several times in the day for about a fortnight or more. When they are capable of consuming more, they are fed on barley meal and tallow greaves mixed, together with the water in which the greaves have previously been boiled; my poultryman also uses horseflesh to mix with their other food.

The above constitutes all that is necessary to produce early ducklings for the table. Now as to