

WHAT FIFTY HENS DID.

EVIDENCE OF MR. A. G. GILBERT, POULTRY MANAGER
THE DOMINION CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM
BEFORE THE SELECT STANDING COM-
MITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND COLONIZATION.

THE Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization met, Mr. Bain, chairman, presiding. Mr. A. G. Gilbert, manager of the Poultry Department, Central Experimental Farm, was called and addressed the committee as follows :

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I have very great pleasure in meeting you again and laying before you that portion of the experimental work of the past year that is new or comparatively so. When I had the honor of appearing before your committee last year, I was requested to select fifty hens as much representative of the barnyard fowls of the country as possible, and see what I could make them pay in a year ; in other words, to handle them to the best possible advantage, the whole to be an object lesson to the farmers of the country. In order to make that statement as concise, intelligible and satisfactory as possible, I have prepared the following data in table form, which you will perhaps allow me to read and afterwards make any further explanations necessary. I appeared before the committee on the 10th of March last year and the experiments commenced on the 1st of April following. Fifty hens, representative barnyard fowls, were selected as follows : Nine silver-laced Wyandottes, seven white Javas, and thirty-four mixed or common hens. Among the latter were eleven Plymouth Rock-Dorking crosses. In making the above selection my object was to have stock of the proper age and in such condition as would likely make with proper handling, of course, the best winter layers ; that is, yield their product when it was worth most. To have a certain number of thoroughbreds, so as to compare them with the mixed hens, and from which I could raise male birds to sell for market purposes, or for breeders—the pullets being, of course, retained as future layers.

EGGS LAID.

The eggs laid by the fifty hens during the year were as follows :

April	571
May	540
June	317
July	242
August	155
September	61
October	77
November	344
December	577
January	693
February	600
March	586
Total	4,773

It will be noticed in the above that the egg production was greatest at the period of high prices, and least during the months of August, September and October when prices were at their lowest. During the months of low prices the sitters were hatching out, or had hatched out broods of chickens. The object was to have chickens growing at the period of low prices. In other words, when eggs were cheap, as compared with winter prices, they were used to hatch chickens from, and the cockrels of these chickens were sold as breeders, or could have been sold for market purposes at 10 cents per pound, the pullets being reserved for winter layers. Another object aimed at and successfully accomplished was to get the hens over their moult, which is their season of non-production, at the time of low prices. (July, August and September), and to have them laying again when prices were good. The success achieved is shown in the 344 eggs, the output for November, when new laid eggs were worth in Ottawa 25 cents per dozen, and then we have 587 eggs in December, when 30 and 35 cents per dozen was paid in the same city of Ottawa for the new laid article. You will also notice that we had from the fifty hens 693 eggs in January, 600 in February, and 586 in March, when the experiment ceased. So we had the greatest egg yield of the year at the time when prices were at their best. Surely this course of procedure is worth imitating by those farmers who make no effort to have their hens laying during winter and obtain their product in the spring or summer, when prices are at their lowest. Six hundred and ninety eggs in January show nearly fifty per cent.