

Poultry.

Early Rearing of Broods.

BY R. A. BROWN.

Most every one desires early chickens, and many take great pains to secure this end; but sometimes with all the earnestness and enthusiasm that is often thrown into the labor in trying to get out early chicks for market and show purposes, many come sadly to grief. Sometimes we are too good to the setter and to the chick. Tiny, wee things they are, tender as a babe; but how often are their wants not supplied, not knowing what they are. We often overdo our work and kill them by kindness, but more often with neglect. We get the hen on the nest and keep her there, supplied with every comfort and requirement so near, that she may not leave the nest a minute during the term of her imprisonment, so that when the days are past that chicks should have appeared, we find none. We go anxiously to the nest, take out the eggs one by one, look at them, shake them, put them to our ear, and revolve the question in our mind whether to break the shell or not. We do so, and peep anxiously inside at its opening. We part the shell and out comes a dead chicken, to all appearance perfectly developed and ready to encounter the outside world. Now we take up another after another, and dispose of them in a like manner. Some matured like the first, some nicely started, some apparently fresh, and some rotten. We are startled at the state of things and feel very vexed; sometimes, perhaps, they are eggs from a distance that cost us probably a good figure. However, those eggs were carefully selected, and we have spared neither time nor labor to have them properly incubated, and the end is one of mere vexation. We wait a few days, and after half a dozen hens have come off with about as many chicks, they are placed under one hen, the other hens being supplied with fresh eggs. This hen is the choicest of the lot and takes kindly to the young brood. Now we feel assured of something, and try our luck again, after denouncing the evils of the old hen, of the weather, and sometimes the man that sent those eggs packed as they were. One night over, all well; but before evening comes again a chick is stiff in death, having been probably trampled to death by that "ungainly wretch," and another is dumpish, or seems chilled. Next day one is pecked to death, the one that was dumpish is now dead, and another along with it. At the end of a week the rats take away the last one; with this we feel a relief, but oh! so mortified. Now we hunt up our books and papers and carefully peruse their columns to see if any fellow is as lucky as ourselves, but cannot find any solace or remedy in them. Our neighbor comes across on an errand, takes a peep in at our poultry house, looks at its contents, and asks how many chicks we have. We say not any, but have about half a dozen hens sitting. This man who keeps no particular breed, but a mixture of all sorts, says: Why, we had two old hens come out last week with a great swarm, and all are smart and growing like weeds. We feel, "oh, below zero," and probably would like to "lick" him, but like Edgar Poe's raven, "say never, oh, never a word." To be successful in chicken raising or rather hatching, the hen must not sit too close or be off too long, or too frequently. Hatching eggs is similar to scalding pigs, which, if left in the hot water too long, will set the hair, which, to be successful, requires a dip and some fresh air. Just so with the eggs; they require fresh air, especially as the chick becomes nearly perfected. After an egg has been sat on for 18 days the chick then breathes air into the lungs from an opening made into the air bubble by the beak of the chick, and consequently if the hen sits too close there is not sufficient fresh air coming to the exterior of

the shell to supply the requirements of the chick, which will die from poisonous gas made from its own breath. If the hen is kept constantly on the nest at that time the feathers of the hen surrounding the eggs smother the chick, the same as if a person's head were enveloped in a feather bed. Eggs from an old hen that has been mated with a young rooster, prove more productive than eggs from pullets, as the latter's eggs are small and have not vitality enough about them to be strong, while the eggs of the hen are large, which gives the chick size and also plenty of nourishment while it is being incubated. The young father entails life and energy, which enables it to keep out of the way of the "old hen's feet," and saves it from being trampled to death, and also helps to keep its blood warm by moving around nimbly, while the chicks sired by an old bird are dumpish and weak, always in the way, and never on time to get the choice bits which are thrown to them, but are picked up by its more nimble brothers. Early set eggs require to be set in deep boxes sufficient to keep off cold drafts from the eggs when the hen is off, but with sufficient footing for the hen to get on and off without jumping down on the eggs when she returns to her nest.

Guinea Fowls.

The *Poultry World* says that Guinea fowls are among the most neglected breeds of domestic poultry known, and there are but few farmers or others who ever take the pains to give them even ordinary care and attention, permitting them to roam around at pleasure, to roost in trees or on the top of the barn, or wherever they take a fancy to, and permit them to lay and hatch just where fancy dictates. As a marketable commodity, the Guinea can not yet rank very high, on account of the fact that but few persons have ever eaten them, consequently do not know or appreciate their merits as a table fowl. There are, too, hundreds of farmers who raise a small flock of Guineas each year, who have never tasted the flesh of this bird.

Those who are fond of game, or of poultry which has a gamey flavor, will not fail to be abundantly satisfied with the Guinea fowl, which is composed entirely of dark meat, and which has retained, through long years of comparative domestication, the half wild habits which, it seems, can not be effectually bred out of them.

As they are not at all easy to capture, no matter how hard one tries to make and keep them tame, when one or two of them are desired for table use, it is a good plan to shoot them—with ball, if you are a good shot—and aiming only at the head, so as not to riddle or injure the other parts of the body. And do not kill the old birds, for they make rather tough eating, but select the cocks between one and two years old—not older, as these have their full growth and are juicy and splendid eating, when nicely roasted in a moderate oven.

The eggs of the Guinea are very rich and of fine flavor, and what they lack in size is fully made up by the large number laid by the hens each season, though it is not the easiest thing in the world to find just where the nests are, even though careful and persistent search be made. The size of the eggs and the comparative difficulty to tell whether they are fresh or not, until they are broken open, prevents, in a great measure, their ever becoming popular in our markets, or much sought after by those lovers of good, fresh eggs, who are able and willing to pay a good round price for the genuine article—a fresh egg.

Fowls can be improved more easily than can anything else on the farm, as the chicks invariably follow the markings and peculiarities of the cocks. It will be no use, therefore, to breed from favorite hens unless some care is bestowed in the selection of the males. The cocks must always be of a pure breed, if uniformity and desirable results are to be attained, for should the slightest degree of mongrel blood be in the cock the young stock will come of all colors, shapes, and imperfections.

Never cross non-sitters, such as the Leghorns and Black Spanish, or Polands and Hamburgs, for the progeny of the cross between any two of them usually turns out to be a scrub. The good qualities of both parents are lost in the union, and good sitters and indifferent layers are the result. The non-sitters cannot be improved in their dominant peculiarity (disinclination to sit) by any kind of a cross. They must be bred pure, each breed distinct.

Annual Meeting of the Ontario Poultry Association.

The exhibition of this association took place at Toronto from the 7th to the 13th Feb'y. The entries were exceedingly large, and the judges had no easy task. At this season of the year the birds are in full feather, and appear to the best advantage, and in this respect the exhibition has a great advantage over the fall shows, which generally catch the old birds in the moult, when their plumage is in a very ragged condition. The collection of poultry on the whole was pronounced to be the finest ever held on the continent. In that deservedly popular and attractive breed the Light Brahmas, which are now to be seen at the best in all the glory of their snowy plumage, the show has never been equalled in the Province. The birds, both old and young, were all fine specimens, both in regard to the fancy points, size and general excellence. Several of them were what a prominent United States breeder pronounces extraordinary specimens. The same remarks apply to the Dark Brahmas, which are still considered a standard breed, although they are not such favorites on this side of the Atlantic as the lighter colored variety. The Cochins, as a class, were not heavily represented, but the prize-winning birds were nevertheless exceptionally fine. The games made up the best collection ever gathered at one show on this continent. They were very numerous, the entries totalling about four hundred. The Montreal birds swept off a large number of the prizes. The competition was so keen and close that many fine birds had to remain unrecognized so far as the awards are concerned. The Plymouth Rocks were unusually good this year. The first prize went to Sherbrooke, Q. The Hamburgs formed a most beautiful collection, as nearly all the varieties in this class were exceedingly showy. The golden-pencilled variety were perhaps the best in the class for fine points. The Leghorns were also well represented. The Black Spanish show no sign of deterioration, although a comparatively old fancy variety. The French varieties are represented by Houdans, of which there were many good birds. Of Polands, there was not a poor bird in the place, and the prize winners leave little room for criticism. The display of turkeys, geese and pigeons was magnificent, being very large. Mr. Main sent some gigantic bronze turkeys.

Diarrhoea in Fowls.

As soon as it is observed that a fowl has diarrhoea, which will be noticed by a wet, slimy appearance behind, it should be given about the size of a hazel or hickory nut of butter, three or four times a day until cured. But when the disease has run for some length of time, and has become chronic, it is generally very difficult to cure. Then give a full teaspoonful of castor oil and three or four drops of laudanum, night and morning, for a few days. This will be found a permanent cure.

A most excellent food is wasted when fresh bones are allowed to lie neglected about a chicken-house. Raw bones of about all kinds are greedily devoured by fowls, and the more marrow or meaty matter adhering the better. The latter, however, they will trim off if allowed the opportunity, and then if the bones are crushed under an old axe, hammer or sledge, they will put every fragment out of sight in a hurry. Chicken's bones are eaten as greedily as the rest. A chicken has no sentiment in such matters.

Too many hens with one cockerel is one cause of chickens dying in the shell. Several cocks together causes heavy battles, which is just as bad. All hens that are kept as breeders should be mated in a separate yard with a good vigorous cockerel, not over ten hens in the flock, (seven, if convenient) and there will be less complaint about bad hatchers.

A correspondent in an exchange says: Our supply of Indian corn, on which we had been feeding the ducks, gave out. Prior to this they had been laying well. Having plenty of barley on hand, we fed with that. The first week there was a sensible diminution in the return of eggs, and in the second we only got one-half the quantity. We then went back to Indian corn; the first week the eggs increased, and the second week of the return to the old diet, we had again a full supply. The conclusion we have come to is that the laxative nature of barley led to the decreased supply of eggs, but the decrease was not so marked in the hens as in the ducks.