

There are hundreds of fanciers who keep a few fine fowls solely for the pleasure, and care nothing whether they are profitable or otherwise. In the company of their pets they pass many a happy leisure hour, and take great and justifiable pride in improving the breed for which they have a special weakness; and there are many who would not exchange their pets for any other variety, even if they would lay twice as many eggs. These fanciers often pay what seems to the uninitiated fabulous sums for an extra fine specimen to improve their stock, and the large breeders find a ready sale for choice specimens among the small fanciers. But the man who makes egg production his exclusive business does not require exhibition stock, as it often happens that a 95 point bird is no better as a layer than another of the same breed less than 80. But in the face of this fact I hope that nobody will disregard the rules of scientific breeding. It must be remembered that the best stock will in time degenerate to a miserable lot of scrubs unless proper selection be made in mating the breeding stock, and they will not only degenerate in fancy points but in laying qualities also.

If fowls are to be kept in large numbers for the purpose of supplying the food market with eggs and poultry, there are several questions to be considered in selecting the breed. But I suppose that the prospective poulterer is desirous of making the greatest net profit per annum, regardless of what system may be adopted. This being settled we will proceed

The most profitable time to produce eggs is during the winter months; during the spring and summer months all the hens in creation are laying, and eggs are consequently very cheap. I would say, let the public be supplied at these seasons with the cheap eggs. If your fowls have been laying from the latter end of November until the end of April you can afford to give them a rest, which they must have in any case; and remember this is the cheapest time to give it them. If your eggs are large and strictly fresh they will average you during the winter months at least 30 cents per dozen, either in Toronto or Montreal. Last winter they reached as high as 50 cents.

In considering the question of breed it does not follow that the breed laying the greatest number of eggs in the year is the best suited to your purpose. There are many champions of the White Leghorns who claim this merit for them, but with all deference to Mr. Sanderson's article in September issue on the subject, I very much doubt that Leghorns, either White or Brown, will equal either Brahmas or Plymouth Rocks in the number of eggs produced during the winter months in Canada—they may surpass them in a warmer climate; but

I will not dispute that they may lay more eggs in the entire year than any other variety. However, I have always found that Leghorns do the bulk of their laying when eggs are cheap. Under exceptionally favorable circumstances Leghorns will, no doubt, prove good layers in winter, but Brahmas and Plymouth Rocks will give a good account of themselves where only ordinary accommodation and attention is given. I do not doubt Mr. Sanderson's word when he says he has known Leghorns to surpass Brahmas as layers in winter, but cannot help thinking that the Brahmas may have been of some poor unimproved stock, better adapted for sitting than laying. I have noticed that the sudden and severe cold snaps that we so often get during winter in Canada check egg-production, and will cause Leghorns to stop altogether, when Brahmas will continue on without interruption. I think there are very few who will dispute that the Brahmas withstand the cold better than the Leghorns. The fowl best suited to your requirements is the one that will produce the greatest number of eggs during the winter months, with good ordinary care and attention.

Plymouth Rocks, also, will be found very hardy and excellent winter layers, provided you get stock from a good laying strain, that has been carefully bred for years with this object in view. This is a very important point. I have often seen Plymouth Rocks, and Brahmas to, that were hardly worth their keep as layers; but good laying stock can always be purchased. Where only one breed is to be kept perhaps the Plymouth Rocks may prove the most profitable, as they mature earlier than the Brahmas. This is a great consideration, as the cockerels may be killed and sent to market early, and the pullets can be reared to maturity at less cost.

Egg production can be greatly increased by forcing your birds (after they have arrived at maturity), and when the income is to be derived from eggs it is policy to give the stock stimulating food in order to produce the greatest number in the shortest time. But I would warn the inexperienced not to use these forced eggs for hatching purposes. Your best plan will be to select those birds that have distinguished themselves as extra good layers, and breed from them the following season; and thus by judicious selection you will in a few years possess a strain of fowls that will far surpass the original stock as layers.

Yours very truly,

T. A. WILLITTE.

Toronto, Oct. 7th, 1884.

If you have surplus stock of good quality, advertise and sell it. If not really good, kill and eat it, or send it to the market.