

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

ONLY AN EGG.

By Charles McIlvaine.

If a hen's fresh egg is put into water heated to the boiling point, which is 212 degrees of heat by the thermometer, and allowed to remain there for from three to five minutes, then taken out and broken open, the contents of the shell will be partially hardened (coagulated). Everybody knows what a good breakfast is therein. If this same egg had been placed in the same boiler, without water, but with fresh air, and the heat kept at 103 degrees all the time for twenty-one days, a live chicken would have broken the shell by its own force, and would very soon have asked for a breakfast for itself. Or, if the egg had remained under the hen that laid it for twenty-one days, the heat of her body (she would have been feverish while sitting on it) would have changed the clear, stringy fluid and the yellow yolk into a chicken. The hen that lays the egg is the mother of the chicken; the hen that hatches it is the nurse.

This wonderful change from the "white" and "yolk" of an egg into a live chicken with blood, bones, flesh, feathers, sight, hearing, and a voice piping loudly for something to eat, is brought about by a regular heat lasting through a certain number of days. If the egg gets too hot or too cold, or does not get moisture enough from the air, the making of the chicken inside of the egg will be stopped. The egg will be spoiled. A spoiled egg is unfriendly.

An egg is very much like a seed, only that it is made of animal matter instead of vegetable matter, because it is intended to produce, or grow into, an animal. Every plant begins from a seed; every animal, from the elephant to the mouse, from the whale to the minnow, from the ostrich to the gnat, begins with an egg.

An egg is made up of several parts. The shell is composed of lime. Through this, air and water, in the shape of moisture, can pass in slowly. Directly inside of the shell is a thin, tough skin (membrane). This prevents the moisture in the eggs from getting out through the lime shell. If there was nothing but the shell, the egg would dry up.

The white of an egg, as it is called, is a substance called albumen (al-bu-men). It surrounds the yellow yolk, which is also largely albumen. On the outside of the yolk, fastened to it, you will often notice a white jelly like speck. This contains the germ. The germ is so small that it cannot be seen without the aid of a powerful microscope. Until the hen sits upon the egg, or it is placed in an incubator to hatch, the white and yolk protect the germ—keep it floating so that it will not be jarred or fastened to the shell, or be injured in any way. The air space at the large end of the egg acts as an air cushion. An egg without a live germ in it will not hatch. There would be nothing from which the chicken could grow. Neither will a seed grow if the germ is destroyed.

The Albumen from eggs is used to give the gloss to photographs, and largely in the printing of the colors and figures on calicoes. It clears coffee by getting thick (coagulating) in the hot water, sinking, and carrying down the fine particles of coffee (grounds) with it. In cakes—you know how it is used in cakes.

A sitting hen seems to be used to be a disagreeable old crosspatch. However much she snarls and pecks, she is but doing her whole duty. She is protecting her nest and, to her, precious eggs in it. She has her rights and sticks up for them.

After a hen has been sitting on a nest of good eggs for five days, if you hold one of the eggs up to a bright light (keeping light from shining around it), by looking through it, you will see a tiny speck with a hammer-shaped head and a short, thin tail. If you had a proper arrangement for magnifying it, you would see that there was life in it.

By the tenth day veins full of blood can be seen running and branching through the white of the egg. In darker places the head and parts of the body will be taking shape. Each day will show a change. The air space at the large end of the egg grows larger. By the eighteenth day the chick is nearly finished. Between the twenty-first and twenty-third day the chick breaks a small hole in the shell. This is called "pipping." The egg is said to be "pepped." Through this hole, which is at the chick's beak, it breathes. After practising for a while, it kicks and struggles until it breaks the shell into two halves, around its middle. Then it rolls out—a weak, jerky, wet chick. Very soon it dries, pokes its head out from under the hen's feathers, and takes its first look at the world. The old hen talks to it, —hen talk,—and no doubt tells it about breakfast to be had—after a while, and a much larger world, with worms, for it to look at when she takes it off the nest.

Think of it! In twenty-one days what would have made good cake, or pudding, or omelette, turns into a pretty, active, live chicken, with ideas of its own; and heat brings this wonderful change.

The egg which hatches never makes a mistake. If it is a hen's egg, a chicken comes forth, if a humming bird's, a humming bird is hatched from it; if an ostrich's, an eagle's, a duck's, it produces young after its kind. Even the shape and color of the feathers is imitated.

A humming bird's egg is not much larger than a filbert. An ostrich egg holds three pints. The eggs of a snail are the size of a pin head. The eggs of turtles and snakes are covered with a tough skin. They do not have a hard shell. The sun's heat hatches them. I often find turtle and snake eggs in my potato patch, when the ground is soft, and the rows stand where the sun has a good chance at them. When the young are hatched, they hide under stones and roots until they get used to things.

Collections of birds' eggs for study are pleasant and instructive. Taking birds' eggs for fun is not funny at all when we come to think about it. Every egg taken kills a bird. Is killing fun?

LORD NELSON AND THE LIZARD.

It is said that the first Lord Nelson once owed his life to a lizard. There lives in South America a beautiful creature of this tribe, called the monitor, or warning lizard, which makes a sort of shrill cry at the approach of poisonous snakes. The natives fancy that it does this because it loves men, and wishes to save them. Nelson ordered his hammock, to be slung under some trees, and being tired out, fell asleep. In the middle of his nap a warning lizard passed across his face. The Indians saw this, and knowing what it meant, waked him. He started up, to find one of the deadliest serpents of the land coiled up at his feet ready to spring.

He who won't be advised can't be helped. Wisdom in the start saves disappointment in the end.

THE LITTLE BOY WHO FISHED.

The little boy lived a long, long time ago. He went to school in a rough log schoolhouse and sat on a high board bench, without any back to lean against. And the bench was so very high that his small feet could not touch the floor. And, too, he had no desk on which his teacher could put pretty pictures and bright blocks and sticks for him to play with. He never sang pretty motion-songs nor marched to sweet music.

So this little boy used to get very tired sitting still and doing nothing but swing his feet hour after hour. Once in the forenoon and once in the afternoon he went out on the floor and stood by his teacher and learned his A, B, C's, and how to spell "A, b, ab."

Don't you suppose he often thought of the shady woods where the birds were singing and the squirrels scampering about? or of the silvery little brook that ran through the meadow in which the tiny minnows were darting around?

One day, while he was twisting about on his high seat, he spied a little gray mouse peeping out from a hole in the floor in the corner near him. He almost laughed out loud. Then he quietly pulled a piece of line out of his pocket and tied on it a bit of cheese from his dinner-basket. Then he threw the line out as far as he could toward the mouse's door in the old floor.

It was not long before the teacher saw him. "Jimmie," said he, "what are you doing?"

"Fishing, ma'am," the little Jimmie answered, frightened.

"What are you fishing for?"

"For a mouse, ma'am."

The children all laughed; but the little Jimmie didn't, for he saw that the teacher looked very sober.

"Very well," said she. "I will give you just five minutes to catch that mouse. If you don't get him in that time, I'll have to punish you for playing in school."

Jimmie sat very still, holding the line, his heart thumping very fast and such a lump in his throat.

There was perfect silence in the little log schoolhouse. Every childish heart was full of sympathy for Jimmie. No one thought of laughing.

Pretty soon a pair of bright eyes peeped again out of the hole. The string lay so near and the cheese did smell so good! So the poor foolish mouse—out he crept, nearer still and nearer, all unconscious of the eyes watching him. He took a dainty nibble—how good! He took another and another and—

"Oh, ma'am, I've caught him! Here he is!" shouted Jimmie, flinging the dainty mouse up in the air, his tiny teeth stuck fast in the hard cheese.

Then the children laughed and clapped their hands, so glad that Jimmie would not be punished. I am sure the teacher was glad, too.

As for Jimmie, with the teacher's permission he took the pretty mouse outdoors and let him go and he never fished in school any more.—Flora B. Brown, in Little Folks.

When you wish to keep boiled or baked potatoes warm for some time lay a towel into a colander, wrap it snugly about the potatoes, covering them closely, and set inside a saucpan with a little water at the bottom kept just at the boil.

It's a wise man who can keep his temper, for any fool can lose it.

An accomplished fact is in itself a powerful argument.