

Poultry Yard.

Letter from "Miss A. Leith."

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—Again I sit down to avail myself of the pleasure of writing another letter to THE CANADA FARMER. Since I last did so, I have had pretty bad luck with my little ducks. In the first place out of a brood of 11 there are only two left. I used to feed my little ducks at first with shorts mixed with water. One day I went to the pen I had made for my young broods and found one of the ill-fated ducklings lying dead in the saucer of shorts. The poor little thing had got in and stuck in the clammy mixture. I was just in time to save one of them from the same death another day. The pen they were in was not very secure, having some holes in the sides. One morning I went as usual to feed them, and imagine my horror on perceiving that out of the 10 only 6 remained. I instantly let the remaining 4 out and the mother. That night I set a large rat trap with a piece of cheese in it. But next morning the trap was dragged across the floor and empty. Next night I set the trap with bacon rubbed in rat poison. I did not go out till twelve o'clock next day, and when I looked there sat a skunk in the trap. A gun was brought and he was shot, and I was not troubled with him any longer. After that two of the remaining ducks died. I have been troubled with a fox, which has taken away 1 black hen, a gray rooster and a black Poland, which left 7 little chickens which once were 8 but one of them was drowned in the well. I have on my hands at the present a sick rooster. He was taken ill one morning a little while ago. I left him in the shed for some time and fed him on oat meal and pepper. Then I took him into the kitchen beside the stove and fed him well and gave him *iron water*, and he had a basket full of sawdust and a piece of old carpet on the top to sleep on. He soon improved and I put him out, into the yard, every day where he picks about for himself. I take him in at night to the shed. His symptoms were, very shaky legs; a thin body; very pale comb and very pale gills. He is now rapidly improving and getting fat and strong. I have had pretty good luck with my chickens; I have got just 20 chickens and 12 ducks. Pray, Mr. Editor, what is a good way to prevent hens sitting that you don't want to sit? I keep shoving mine off the nest till they get sick of it, and leave the nest. I shut up some ducks to cram for killing, but they would not eat, so I let them out again. How can you tell the different breeds of hens one from the other? I have a lot and I don't know what breed they are. When you want to kill some ducks for dinner and want to kill the drakes and keep the ducks, how can you tell them apart? I do not think the green feathers at the side are any mark that they are drakes. Pray, dear Mr. Editor, let me know in the next batch of CANADA FARMERS you send me.

Yours truly,

ALMA LEITH.

The Hermitage, Ancaster, August 29, 1866.

NOTE BY EDITOR CANADA FARMER.—Our young friend will not find it all success in poultry-keeping, but with care and attention will accomplish much. In reference to her enquiries we would say: 1. There are various ways of curing hens of a determination to sit. Confinement in a strange pen or dark box for a short time will often do it. We have seen it recommended to shut them up all day in a tub with an inch or two of water on the bottom, putting them on the roost at night. If not cured the first day, repeat the operation. They will soon be glad to stand on their feet. 2. It would be a long story to tell how to distinguish the different breeds of fowls from each other. Probably Miss A. Leith's "lot" are of no particular breed, but of mixed kinds. The Cochins, Brahmas, Dorkings, Spanish, Polands, Hamburgs, &c., have all their distinctive marks. Most of them have been described in back numbers of THE CANADA FARMER. A good poultry-book would tell our young friend all about them. 3. The curling up of the tail-feathers is a sure mark of the drakes.

New Way of Paying Subscriptions.

THE following is an amusing account of the way a farmer was taught how cheaply he could take the paper. The lesson is worth pondering by a good many men "we wot of."

'You have hens at home, of course. Well, I will send you my paper for one year, for the products of a single hen for one season; and the proceeds. It seems trifling, preposterous, to imagine the products of a single hen will pay a subscription; perhaps it won't, but I make the offer.'

'Done,' exclaimed farmer B., 'I agree to it,' and appealed to me as a witness of the affair.

The farmer went off apparently much elated with his conquest; the editor went on his way rejoicing.

Time rolled around, the world revolved on its axis, and the sun moved in its orbit as it formerly did; the farmer received his paper regularly, and regaled himself with the information from it, and said he was surprised at the progress of himself and family in general information.

Some time in the month of September, I happened to be up again in the office, when who should enter but our friend farmer B.

'How do you do, Mr. B?' said the editor, extending his hand, his countenance lit up with a bland smile; 'take a chair and be seated, fine weather we have.'

'Yes sir, quite fine indeed,' he answered, and then a short silence ensued, during which our friend B. hitched his chair backward and forward, twirled his thumbs abstractedly, and spit profusely. Starting up quickly, he said, addressing the editor, 'Mr. D., I have brought you the proceeds of that hen.'

It was amusing to see the peculiar expression of the editor, as he followed the farmer down to the wagon. I could hardly keep my risibles down.

When at the wagon the farmer commenced handing over to the editor the products amounting to eighteen pullets, worth 12½ cents each, and a number of dozens of eggs, making in the aggregate, at the least calculation, one dollar and fifty cents more than the price of the paper.

'No need?' said he, 'of men not taking a family newspaper, and paying for it too. I don't miss this from my roost, yet I have paid for a year's subscription and over. All folly sir; there is no man but what can take a newspaper; it's charity you know commenced at home.'

'But,' resumed the editor, 'I will pay for what is over the subscription, I did not intend this as a means of profit, but rather to convince you. I will pay—'

'Not a bit of it, sir; a bargain is a bargain, and I am already paid sir—doubly paid, sir. And whenever a neighbor makes the complaint I did, I will relate to him the hen story. Good day, gentlemen.'

AVERAGE EGG YIELD.—In a late number of the *Country Gentleman* a poultry raiser said that from 35 to 40 eggs a year, was the best average he had been able to get from about a dozen hens. This slander on Miss Biddy's character brought several champions at once to their feet. One gentleman in Ohio has 30 hens, which in seven months from January 1st, had averaged 71 eggs. Another correspondent had picked up 1,510 eggs, from 10 pullets of the white Leghorn variety, from the first of last September, to the first of July this year, or 151 each in ten months. Still another, from 10 Brahmas, has had 738 eggs, or nearly 74 each, from March 1st, to July 31st, beside raising 60 chickens.

COERCING HENS.—A lady correspondent of the *Mobile Advertiser*, writing from Kansas, relates the following eggstraordinary circumstance:—

After breakfast, I was surprised to see my landlady go out, and catching her hens, tie each one's legs together, and throw them upon the ground, with "there, be good."

"What did you do that for?" I asked.

"To make 'em lay," she answered.

"Make 'em lay, will that do it?" I inquired.

"La, yes," she said, "didn't you ever hear tell of that before?"

I confessed that I had not. In an hour she went out again, and picked up the hens; sure enough, some had laid, those she let go, and they ran off, not even cackling their gratitude. But those hens which seemed disposed to be contrary, she struck on the back, saying—"You'd better lay—you'd better lay, for you won't go until you do," and in a little while they, too, had recompensed their mistress for feeding them so hountfully. She says she does so every morning, and the hens know well enough that "they have got to lay."

Entomology.

The Wheat Midge.

The common Wheat-midge, (*Cecidomyia Tritici*), is an insect which was introduced into this country some twenty or thirty years ago from Europe, and which, according to returns from the different counties of the state of New York, which were thoroughly sifted and footed up by the Secretary of their State Agricultural Society, destroyed in one single year in that single State the enormous amount of fifteen million dollars' worth of wheat. In England the largest amount of wheat it was ever known to destroy in one single year was one twentieth of the entire crop. Such a small percentage as that, American farmers would not think worth talking about; but here the Wheat-midge often takes over half the entire crop. The reason is simple. In England there are no less than three parasitic insects preying upon the Wheat-midge; in this country there is not one, because it wisely emigrated here without its parasites. One would think that common sense would indicate to our Government the wise policy, as a matter of dollars and cents, of importing the parasites, particularly as the whole operation need not cost more than a few thousand dollars. But no. Although this plan was long ago recommended by some of the best entomologists in the country, Dr. Fitch, for example, it has never been adopted, and probably never will be. Why? Because our Legislatures think that insects are such very minute objects, that they are unworthy their notice; forgetting that the plague of flies, the plague of lice and the plague of locusts were three of the worst plagues that God in his wrath sent to afflict the rebellious land of Egypt.

The Wheat-midge itself in its perfect or winged form is a small two-winged fly, shaped much like a mosquito, but considerably smaller, and with an orange-colored abdomen. It comes out in June from under the ground, where it has lain all winter, the time varying a little according to the latitude, and lays its eggs upon the ears of wheat when they are in blossom. These quickly hatch out into the orange-coloured little maggots which do all the mischief, sucking out the life-blood of the future kernel so that it shrinks up to nothing. When well-fed they mostly go underground and construct a very filmy cocoon which adheres strongly to the surrounding earth, and inside which they transform next spring into the pupa state. But a few remain in the ear and construct their cocoon there, which fits so closely to their bodies, that it is only visible where it projects a little at each end, the cocoon itself being transparent and finer and more filmy than the most delicate gold-beaters' skin. The practical inference to be drawn therefrom, is that when farmers are cleaning wheat, which is infected or suspected of being infested by the Wheat-midge, they ought always to burn up or otherwise destroy the "tailings." For these "tailings" will doubtless contain many of the larvae that have staid in the ear, which, if not destroyed, might hatch out next season into the perfect fly and propagate the breed.—*Practical Entomologist*.

THE SPARROW V. THE CATERPILLAR.—The *Haddington Courier* says: "A circumstance has come to our notice which forcibly illustrates the utility of our small birds in the economy of creation, and the folly of seeking to extirpate them. A gentleman in the county who has a choice variety of gooseberry bushes, apprehensive of the visits of the sparrow tribe, and of the damage that would ensue to his fruit, took the trouble and expense of getting a stout wire awning thrown across that part of the garden where his cherished plants were located. He anticipated a splendid crop as the result of shielding his fruits from the attacks of Master Sparrow and his companions, but was doomed to disappointment. He had checkmated the little birds, but in doing so he had given a fair field for the ravages of the caterpillar, and at the maturing season he found, to his no small annoyance, that both leaf and fruit had disappeared. This little incident adds another proof to the many that the small birds are, after all, the best friends that the gardener has. They no doubt help themselves liberally to a share of the best, but, in so doing, give a valuable equivalent in helping to keep down the numbers of one of the most destructive pests the gardener has to contend against."