

POULTRY.

Poultry on the Farm.

BY MRS. IDA E. TILSON.

I used to seize every interesting statement I saw concerning poultry culture, very much as I did bright pennies when a child. Among those things which I began to receive with some reservations, was the often-made statement that old hens moult later every succeeding fall, and should unreservedly be sold off before winter. P. H. Jacobs, of the Poultrykeeper, one of the old hens' best friends, says they moult earlier and earlier, year by year (the oldest before pullets or yearlings), because a feather coat lasts only eleven months, thus bringing the moult about a month earlier each season. I bought a full-blood cockerel, two years ago, which did not get his mature feathering, including full tail, till in October last year. He certainly moulted in September; this year in August. Experienced poultry-women, whom I have questioned, agree with Mr. Jacobs. It is a scientific fact that the bird tribe vary in moulting. Some species change twice a year, others in a longer period than a year, and a few get their adult plumage at first feathering. While my own careful observation leads me also to agree, generally speaking, with Mr. Jacobs, I can parallel the experience of Will Cook, in London Poultry, who has seen different fowls moult all the way from July to March, inclusive. Of course the July and March specimens would be rare, September to November, inclusive, being the commonest time. This warm, dry season fortunately enabled my hens to clothe themselves early. Though I know by trial, tincture of iron in their drinking water is good on such an occasion, for helping to form their plumage, I prefer to use livers, chopped and boiled, and sunflower seed, together with some linseed meal, a little red pepper, and bone meal in their puddings. Dr. Weinland found the lighter color of dead, dry feathers, due to absence or drying up of their little oil lacuna or sacks. Bright, new plumage, therefore, calls for some oily material. The tables of food analyses, sent out by governmental or other chemists, are good reading. I never knew before that most of the lime is taken away from milk when its cream is, and though skimmed milk is valuable, especially in feather and frame building, is not so strong as supposed. I do not stimulate hens to lay while moulting, nor in summer, but expect eggs then and always. What carries hens successfully through their moult, will mature pullets and start them laying. This year, two Brahmas of the same setting and hatch, moulted a full month apart, likewise two sister Wyandottes. In each case, the one always stronger and larger, clothed herself first, probably because as a pullet she got her complete coat sooner, and thus her eleven months came round first. So I find general rules for moulting are greatly modified by weather, food and breed. The practical lesson is this: if you keep hens over, retain those moulting early, which will probably get to laying before cold weather and then keep it up. Those not changing till later can be disposed of.

In the fall cull the flock. Be careful about too much air on your half-clothed hens, as the first cold weather seems strange and pinches most. Because hens have exercised all day, and then roost hot and panting, is no reason why we should, in shutting their house, forget to take account of the progressive coolness of night times. Have winter quarters ready promptly. A young man at Wood Lake, Minn., described his hen-house as having sides formed by pig-pen and granary respectively, and the rear by barn. The front was exposed to the south, and in this ingeniously placed house, water seldom froze, and he was meeting success. Dr. Curryer, the Assistant Superintendent, was telling me they would get few eggs at his own place, in winter, if stakes were not driven down along back and sides of hen-house, and the space between latter and stakes filled with a banking of straw up to eaves, a banking that could be carried on over roof in a climate where snow lay and did not freeze and thaw. I afterward saw a house with its old straw coat not taken away in summer, which, as long as it did not mould nor rot, helped to make the place shady and cool, I suppose. I often said I wished I could take up the straw stacks, away out in the fields, doing no good, and put them around some of the bleak hen-houses, and get the biddies out scratching. One man said he liked just half my idea, and would act upon it to this extent: he should build a hay or straw stack behind or around his hen-house, for shelter, but did not flatter himself that, on his windy prairie, the hens would get out and scratch the straw much. I recommended a scratching shed, too, which he was already planning. Let the large door to house proper, be under this shed and sheltered by it, and, if in a very cold locality, entirely enclose shed, cheaply, of course, making it mostly windows. Too many windows are bad for hen-houses at night, when they cool off as fast, in proportion, as they warmed up by day. Sunshine burning through a clear window, or filtered through a dirty one, is not equal to the pure article. Hence I prefer an open shed, in which are the majority of the windows, rather than in the house proper, unless shutters are used, as on one comfortable building I was taken to see. A pleasant feature of my trip was the drives I had, and the things I was enabled to see. When asked whether I would like to go here or there, I could always make truthful answer, "I like to go everywhere, and see everything that will lead to useful knowledge."

Marketing the Turkey Crop.

BY E. JOHNSTONE.

There are two very important points to be considered by the individual who means to make a profit out of poultry. Both are equally vital to success. One is to raise the crop; the second is to market it advantageously. Of the two I regard the first as really the easier. So many things may spoil a market and take off half the profits of a hard summer's work that I have learned never to anticipate. I build no castles in Spain with the chicken money till it is actually in my pocket (then how quickly it burns a hole out!). A glut in the market, a spell of soft weather, a wreck or a few hours delay to a consignment *en route*—all matters one cannot control—make profitable marketing more of a risk and quite as much of an anxiety as the maturing of the fowls.

In the first place, it is poor business policy to send off a lot of thin, half-fattened poultry, whether chicks, turkeys or geese. True, there are the hazards mentioned above to be taken into consideration, but even on an over-stocked market plump birds, if medium weights, will sell enough above the skinny, under-sized ones to make it an object to feed well; while if the market chances to be good, one is well rewarded.

I put my turkeys up three or four weeks before I think I will send them off, the time depending a good deal on their condition. They ought to be tame enough, at this season, so that when they are fed you can catch one and feel how much is flesh and how much feathers. I generally divide my flock, if large enough to make it an object, putting the early hatched, largest birds up about the middle of October, and letting the late, undersized ones run for the Christmas market. I regard the Thanksgiving market as the poorest, and never ship then unless there is a short supply and high prices, which seldom happens, as everybody seems to want to sell off then.

Some years I have sold my flock on foot to buyers from the city, who come around looking up large lots about the first of November, but generally do best by dividing the flock as stated. The early birds are prime about the second week of November, and there is usually a call for them from the caterers and poulterers, who pay good prices. That lot is disposed of before Thanksgiving. While they are fattening I pen them in an unused stable, where roosts have been put across one end, and feed liberally, letting them out a little while late every afternoon in good weather. The stable is warm, and they take on flesh fast. I feed them corn at night; wheat, crushed oats, screenings, buckwheat, mixed, and scraps from the table in the morning; and at noon a mess of boiled potatoes, mashed and stirred thick with cornmeal, canaille or coarse flour, with cabbage or apples "for greens." I pepper the mess, and salt it slightly. They have plenty of pure water to drink. When we have celery the tops always go to the turks, and if I have parsley they get some of it, as both impart a gamey flavor. The flesh of fowls fattened in this way is of superior quality, and I find it pays—financially as well as in personal satisfaction to work up a reputation for sending well-fed, properly killed, dressed and packed poultry to market. It often means a couple of cents per pound on a "way down" market.

The French method of killing is preferable. The throat is cut and the bird hung up to bleed; the flesh thus being whiter. Where the axe is used and the head cut off the victim should not be allowed to flutter about on the ground, bruising its flesh, but be held firmly by the legs till its struggles are over.

Dry picking is now almost universally practiced. The poultry keeps better. It is very rapidly done, and without breaking the skin, by taking the feathers between the thumb and fingers, and giving a short, quick jerk downward. A bird whose skin is torn should be considered unmarketable. As for dressing and packing, the customs and regulations of the market town should be learned in advance, and both processes conducted accordingly. Different cities have different ordinances, but in most of them the sale of undrawn poultry is forbidden by law, and this is right, for the thought of eating poultry in which the crop and entrails have been left for hours, undergoing a change which evolves poisonous gases that permeate the flesh, is horribly repugnant. Find out and observe the regulations of the market you propose to sell in, and avoid an appearance before a police court. Any commission house dealing in poultry will forward a circular detailing the accepted modes of packing and dressing on application.

If one has a fine lot of turkeys and geese to ship it pays to take pains about it. After the fowls are dressed and nearly cold, but still pliant, bend the legs and wings to the bodies, and secure them with a broad band of cloth, and pull the skin down over the neck and tie it; this not only makes it look better, but prevents the blood from staining the others. When the fowl is stone cold, but not frozen, remove the band and fold in a square of white cheesecloth, making it as square and compact as possible. Pack them in a box or barrel, keeping the shape as intact as you can, and packing solidly. Mark plainly with the name and address of your commission house, and the route you wish the package to go by, if there is more than one, and also your own name and station. Then, it is a prudent precaution to stand by and see that it gets off on the train all right. A careless agent who delays to send it on may lose you your market. I must say, however, that I prefer to sell outright in the home

market, and let the buyer take the risks of shipment, but I find a nice lot of birds, in shape for quick transmission, will always have the call above an ordinary lot.

The second flock I feed just enough to keep them in good condition (they have made their growth, and will not increase much after cold weather sets in) till about the first of December, then they go into the fattening pen and are ripe for the holidays. I do not feed for heavy weight; the medium weights sell fastest; people are suspicious of a very large bird, fearing it is old.

I always keep a close watch of the poultry market and read everything relating to supply and demand in the farm papers, and often get valuable hints in reference to the future course of the market.

Geese are in most demand at Christmas, though there is a fair call for them after the first of November. They are great favorites among the Jews, who use much of their fat in lieu of butter for shortening. They are handled much like turkeys, so far as feeding, packing, etc., are concerned, but require more soft and green food. The French fatten them entirely on soft food, and keep them very closely confined. Very few geese come to market, compared with the other classes of poultry, as their flesh seems to be too strong for the average palate.

GARDEN AND ORCHARD.

Horticulture in Nova Scotia.

Among the various provinces of Canada but one province as yet can boast of having organized and sustained an efficient school of horticulture.

Nova Scotia can now claim the existence of such a school, and can testify to its having been most successfully carried on during the past year. The school was organized by the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association, now under the guidance of its efficient President, J. W. Bigelow, of Wolfville, assisted by the Secretary, S. C. Parker, of Berwick. These gentlemen, together with the aid of W. C. Archibault, of Wolfville, and the Executive Committee of the Association, secured a subsidy from the Provincial Government for the carrying on of the school. The location was settled upon, and the school opened on January 1st, 1893, at Acadia University, Wolfville, in the centre of the fruit belt of the Province. Prof. E. E. Faville, of Iowa State College, was elected to take charge of the new institution. Lecture rooms were secured, laboratories, library, etc., provided, and the school formally opened January 9th, with an enrollment of sixty-five students in the first year's work.

The course of study comprises two years of six months each. Certificates of proficiency are granted to students completing the first year's work, and diplomas leading to a proposed degree for those completing the full two years. The course is a very liberal and practical one, taking up the study of horticulture in its practical as well as theoretical aspect, combining with it the necessary kindred branches, as chemistry, botany, etc., thus presenting a course of study that is to the farm boy what the academy and business college courses are to the town boy intending to fit himself for a profession or trade. The accessible orchards in the immediate vicinity, in all stages of development; gardens, green-houses, etc., in connection with the grounds, make it possible to carry on a large amount of practical work along such lines as pruning, planting, seeding, floriculture in green-house work, cutting, potting, treating of insects and their study, fungicides, and their economical application to fungous growths. These, with the many other practical points, are taken up.

The tuition is free to all students. The school year is from November 1st to May 1st, thus affording an excellent opportunity for the farm boy to attend during the winter months.

The school opens under more favorable circumstances this year, having been better equipped by the Association, which now numbers over one thousand members. Circulars of information will be furnished by the director upon application. During the spring, the Association sent Prof. Faville on a lecture tour, visiting the various parts of the Province, discussing horticulture in its application to different localities. This seems to have hit the right chord, and has strengthened the Association both in membership and in the building up of their new enterprise, the school of horticulture.

Regarding the possibilities of the Maritime Provinces, especially Nova Scotia, in fruit raising, there is no question. Some kind of fruit can be raised in every part of the Province, and with decided success. During the past five years, statistics show an increase of 15 per cent. in small fruits and 53 per cent. in all other fruits. This season's crop is one of the largest known for years in plums, peaches, pears and apples. The estimate of the crop of apples in the Annapolis Valley alone will be over 300,000 barrels. Plums, throughout the Province, will exceed 100,000 bushels; large yields of cranberries, strawberries and gooseberries were reported in their season. Large orchards are being set out every spring. A number of fruit companies have been formed in the Annapolis Valley, setting out young apple and plum orchards.

The markets for the fruit produce are mainly English, American and local. With the present advance in the improvement of transportation facilities, Nova Scotia is fast becoming one of the most favorably known fruit districts of this continent.