

The Hen—The Farmer's Best Friend.

By S. M. Shipley, Seattle, Wash.

It has been well said that in its frantic struggles for an existence humanity naturally seeks to work out its salvation along the lines of least resistance. Therefore, during these late years of depression the producer everywhere is earnestly looking after every little factor that is included in the sum total from which he draws his subsistence. It is at such times as these that we more closely scrutinize little things. The farmer on his 160 acres, after harvesting his grain and finding the balance upon the wrong side of the ledger, may well ask himself if there be not some other industry to which he may apply himself for relief. But is it not possible that he holds in his own hand the key to the situation, and is competent, without forsaking his independent vocation, to apply the remedy? Instead of raising from 100 to 200 acres of grain, and stocking his place with poor stock, even more poorly kept, with every energy directed to his grain fields, whilst the cows and hens are relegated to the core of the women and children, as a sort of insignificant appendage, necessary in a small way but not of sufficient importance to justify time and attention from a farmer's standpoint, he would reform his farming methods by contenting himself with a smaller grain acreage, then supplant his scrub hens with 250 thoroughbreds, properly housed and cared for, stock his farm throughout with the best cows, swine, etc., secure 10 to 20 stands of good bees, see that his orchards are filled with a choice variety of fruit, how different might be the result. Instead of raising so much grain to sell, he would feed more of it to his poultry and stock. His labors would be more evenly divided, and by paying close attention to his hens, bees and cows his income would be not only increased, but available at all seasons of the year. These so-called little things are steadily assuming greater importance. I was raised on a farm where we annually produced from 8,000 to 10,000 bushels of grain. While we kept sheep, cows, hogs and hens, and made money from them, too, still the great consideration was wheat and oats, and to their production all else was subordinated. The care of the cows and poultry particularly fell to me, and I can now see what a stupendous failure the poultry was, as I now understand its possibilities. What a mistake to conclude that the hen is not of sufficient importance to profitably receive the farmer's time and attention. If he says "we only keep a few hens to supply our table; we can't afford to bother with chickens," let him awake to a realization of the fact that the poultry industry, in value of its annual product, is second to no live stock industry in the United States.

Mistress Hen, properly bred, reared and cared for so as to promote the greatest egg production, is the most profitable product of the farm, considering the labor and capital involved, as she is also the most neglected. Mr. James Covert, of one of the United States government experiment stations, well says in one of the recent reports: "Poultry has received less attention and encouragement than almost any rural industry. There is no wide-awake farmer who, IF HE KNEW WHAT COULD BE DONE WITH THE IMPROVED BREEDS OF CHICKENS, WOULD NOT RAISE THEM."

True it is that every farmer should be a poultryman. The relative merits of the different varieties of thoroughbred fowls should be studied by him. A selection made according to his tastes and wants, and then the modern improved methods of caring for them, should be substituted for the old shiftless ones. There is no room on the farm for other than the best, and then, in order to realize a profit from them, winter eggs and early hatched chicks should be his aim. For these suitable dry sheds must be prepared and the fowls be kept in out of the storms. Keep the youngsters growing from shell to maturity. Fatten them before selling, and then sell by weight always. In short, exercise the same thought and care towards this industry that is followed in rearing and marketing pork and beef stock. Then the profits realized will demonstrate that the poultry industry is indeed inseparable from profitable farming. It is incumbent upon us, in these days, to take advantage of every opportunity, and not continue to ignore, through long-established customs or prejudice, any industry which will yield a profit. Mr. Covert further well says: "What we need is men who will persist in learning the most profitable way in which to economize labor and prolong the money-making season for the agricultural class, and then we will see the hen and the cow in their proper places. Other branches of farming have lost place and are falling into decay. A remedy is necessary. We have come to the place where we must devise and apply a different system if we would succeed. The hen and the cow figure conspicuously at this stage."

When it takes thirty-two carloads of wheat to buy two of eggs, why should the Washington farmers permit eggs to be imported from other states? Why continue to raise grain at an actual loss, to sell in order to get money with which to purchase from abroad the poultry products we consume, and which we should, but do not, produce in sufficient quantities for home consumption?

Washington farmers have as favorable a climate and soil for poultry as those of any other section. The fact that nearly a million dollars worth of poultry products are imported annually is an impeachment of our business sense.

Let us hope for the speedy coming of the day when the Washington hen will industriously lay her eggs for export and the other fellow pay the cost of transportation.

Keep Posted.

It is said that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and this truism, slightly changed, is applicable to the success to be achieved in farming in all its branches, and especially in the department of poultry rearing. The man who attempts to raise poultry must put himself on guard and remain there, if he carries the business to that degree of success that is to be desired. First, in the selection of stock he must exercise the best of judgment, and his ideas of what kind would be best suited to his circumstances should be based upon his knowledge obtained from agricultural papers and poultry journals. The editors of these valuable adjuncts to farming make it a study, and are constantly in touch with the brightest minds dealing with such matters. They are ever on the alert to obtain and present everything that will be of benefit to their patrons. The beginner, as well as the veteran, should study these papers (and no better plan offers for doing this than to subscribe for a number of them), keeping up with the procession and thoroughly posted. Having chosen the proper kind of fowls, he should study their habits, characteristics and wants generally, and strive at all times to feed and care for them in an intelligent manner. Having done this, instead of failure, he can surely count on success, and poultry raising will pay.

L. MATTHEWS.

Seattle, Wash.

There is patriotism, poetry and wisdom in the address of J. A. Woll to the dairymen of Washington appearing on our first page today. Read it, and if you are a dairyman you will be moved to a degree that nothing will prevent you coming to the great meeting.

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