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Poultry Notes

Items That Will Interest Our Readers From Many Sources

So far as improving average egg production is concerned the chances without the aid of the trapnest are about 100 to one against, writes the England National Poultry Journal. The best bred cockerels in the world will not help rank, poor layers to breed heavy laying stock, and there is no method of selection, apart from the trapnest, which will enable even the most expert poultryman to select his best layers with any degree or certitude. My first year's trapping showed me that I had selected over 100 birds out of a total of 400 for breeding which did not produce more than 120 eggs in the year. These birds were among the 400 selected from a large flock. They would, failing the use of trapnests, have been used in my breeding pens, and I should doubtless have wondered, as I did previously, why my egg average failed to rise.

The beginner need not be ashamed of a cheap poultry house. It is better to buy good stock and put it in a cheap poultry house than to save money on the purchase price of stock and use it in building an expensive house. When any one starts in to begin a new business the venture is always something of an experiment. If the beginner in poultry keeping builds elaborate poultry houses and makes a failure of the business, the houses are dead property, worth but a smal fraction of their original cost. while good stock is always at par. For this reason comfort rather than elegance should be the rule in building the first poultry house.

In these days when the hen produces so many more eggs than she used to do, and when the importance of the poor layer is emphasized so strongly, a number of theories have been advanced whereby the actual laying ability of the hen could be prophesied by the men who promulgated the theories. It was stated by some that the handling of a hen would demonstrate with but very little exception, whether she was a good or bad layer. These men from considerable experience in handling hens believed that there were a number of physical properties which invariably were found in a good layer and which were not present in poor layers. Length of body; breadth of back well carried out; fineness, length and pliability of the pelqis bones; spread of pelvic arch; lenth of keel bone, and other physical characteristics were pronounced by these men as essential attributes for a good layer.

It is pleasent to the breeder of today to see the progress that has been made in the poultry business during the past thirty years. This is surely commendable and speaks well of the enterprise, intelligence and industry of the average American fancier. Few of the early pioneers are now living to see the fruits of their first labor and perseverance in the "poultry vineyard." But from the outset good and shrewd men have been active and persistent in the good work of improving our fowls. Although in the early years of poultry progress the business was looked upon as a foolish hobby—a hen fever a fixity of purpose, these men kept on, believing there was something in the occupation worthy of studied and continuous efforts. The progress of the poultry industry is due in a great measure to the cultivation of the improved breeds of poultry, and the in the poultry press of this country. Men of means, intelligence or taste, care nothing about common stock of any kind. There is nothing in their looks or qualities worthy of interest or study compared to thoroughbred fowls which have been bred to a legree of uniformity, beauty, utility and excellence.

When hens are confined in limited quarters, there is more danger of their acquiring the "unpardonable sin" of egg eating than when they have free range. To protect ourselves against the consequence of this unnatural habit in the hens, they should be allowed a liberal supply of suitable nests, placed in convenient and secluded retreats, and furnished with porcelain nest eggs. Eggs should be collected two or three times a day and not allowed to accumulate in the nests, otherwise the hens will only lay in a few nests where the greatest number of eggs are, and the efforts to obtain possession of such nests often result in the breaking of the eggs, besides the besmearing of nest, eggs and hens. There is then presented to the fowls so strong a temptation to eat the broken eggs that it is often irresistible, and thus is formed an appetite which will be gratified to a degree that will greatly lessen the egg receipts of the poultry raiser. The presence of egg-eating hens is not to be tolerated in the poultry yard. In a warm climate, eggs should always be gathered frequently, irrespective of the egg-eating vice. When fowls are confined in limited quarters, be sure and construct the nests so that they may be in darkness, or at least in twilight. This is the best prevention of egg-eating that we know of. Locate the nests as far from the windows as possible, and compel the hens to approach them through a long, low covered passage which turns one or two abrupt corners to shut out light.

The Transcript $1.50.

THE EYES OF CONSCIENCE

By ROY TURNBULL

(© by Short Story Pub. Co.)

FRANKLIN CRAIG had been waiting for his chance all the morning. Mr. Bettersworth, his miserly employer, wealthy owner of the fashionable Art and Curio shop, had just stepped to the warehouse, some blocks distant. Yokokita, the Japanese lad of all work, stood lazily talking with the proprietor of the book store adjoining. Stealthily, the art shop clerk walked across the store, filled with treasures in pottery and metal, silk and ebony, to Bettersworth's private antique safe which stood under the cash register. He paused with hand suspended above the combination, the secret of which he had long since surreptitiously acquired. Through the cavelike entrance to the darkened store he could see the living sunshine dancing in the cobbled street.

A gusty breeze swept in, stirring up the weird mixture of smells lurking in the many objects culled from all parts of the globe. His hesitation was brief, for the contrast between the inviting sunshine, with its promise of other lands, and the monotony of the "junk" shop, as he termed it, wherein he had slaved for so long, quickly overcame his scruples.

In a moment he was down on one knee and a little later the safe door stood open before him. His eager hand readily found the thin flat packet of bills that his employer had drawn from the bank early that morning in order to pay for an expected cloisonne treasure from the Orient. Bettersworth's dealings, owing to the diverse methods of the many nationalities trading with him, were always in cash. Ripping off the covering, Craig stuffed the bank notes into his coat pocket. Hot and cold waves coursed through his pulsing veins as his hand closed over the coveted money. His traveling bag had long since been packed against this emergency. A few days of travel and the name of Franklin Craig would be but a memory.

Then slowly, but overwhelmingly, and with a spasmodic contraction of his stomach muscles, he sensed another presence in the darkened store. Instinct, with its indefinable, yet disconcerting force, apprized him of scrutinizing eyes. Turning his head with a painful jerk, he beheld a tall man in a frock coat and an old-fashioned beaver hat, standing on the other side of the low counter, watching him. Craig, the blood rushing away from his blanching face, rose slowly to his feet and shrank back involuntarily, a damning picture of guilt. The strange old man who had so silently entered the store must have witnessed the act of theft and seen him feverishly stuff the ill-gotten money in his pocket.

The intruder stared inscrutably at Craig, a look of world weariness and sadness on his wrinkled face. His lips moved slowly as if he were counting the inexorable moments of time, or muttering unsavory words of condemnation Craig, with purpose and emotion inchoate, stepped forward, his gaze wildly falling on a bronze shield whereon hung an Arabian scimiter, but the old man shook his head austerely from side to side and, turning on his rubber heel, walked forth from the emporium of historical trinkets into the bright sunlight.

Craig fell back against the safe, his tortured brain racing in kaleidoscopic confusion, Then, summoning every ounce of will power, he rushed from the store, but the old man of the beaver hat had vanished. Yokokita, his back to Craig, still held forth idly with the proprietor of the bookstore.

With fear tugging at his entrails, Craig struggled in the upheaval of his mind until it seemed he must collapse. As he saw the fat, dumpy figure of his employer emerge from around the corner of the block, he uttered a sharp ejaculation of terror.

The thought came with a rush—to get the money back into the safe—but no, it was too late! Yokokita had already entered the store and was busily engaged dusting a Louis XIV chest of drawers. Turning desperately in pursuance of a rapidly forming plan, Craig quietly went to the safe and locked it with a turn of the handle. Tearing a bill from the packet in his pocket he thrust it into one of Yokokita's street shoes standing in the corner, always discarded in the morning for sandals. Spying the familiar "Studies in English," which Yokokita had been perusing for weeks, Craig had a stroke of inspiration. He opened the cover of the book and inserted between the leaves a crumpled bit of paper he had fished from his pocket and on which appeared rude numerals.

Craig then hurried out into the little yard where he immediately buried the packet of money in a far corner and whistling merrily busied himself with huge packing cases.

His heart beat wildly as he waited for the explosion. It came with the door flung open and Bettersworth apoplectic on the step.

"Come in here!" he cried. Craig, simulating wonderment, obeyed.

His employer pointed grimly to the antique strong box, the door now standing open.

"I put it in there this morning! There isn't a chance of a mistake! Now it's gone!"

"What, sir?" inquired Craig mildly.

"Money! Money, you idiot! Nearly five thousand dollars! Where have you been?"

This question came like a shot, but Craig was equal to the emergency.

"Unpacking the plasters, in the yard," he responded quickly. "If I had known you had forgotten to lock the safe door, I—I—" he paused, visibly embarrassed, as he glanced over at the gaping Yokokita who understood but little of this wild enactment before him.

"You'd, you'd what?" demanded Bettersworth.

"Why, I wouldn't have gone out in the yard and closed the door behind me," blurted Craig, flushing and endeavoring nobly to shield Yokokita. "I thought Yokokita was in the store all the time."

Yokokita, instinctively catching something of the danger in the air, sputtered in imperfect English.

In a moment, Bettersworth was at the telephone calling the police. Later, when special officers discovered the crumpled ten-dollar bill in the Japanese servant's shoe, the boy from Nippon nearly fainted and when, to top it off, they investigated his pockets and clothing and finally discovered the sheet of paper between the leaves of the "Studies in English," which Bettersworth immediately recognized as the numeral notation of the combination to his safe, poor Yokokita raved incoherently while Craig solicitiously sympathized with him.

A few weeks later, in the courtroom, drowsy and humming with the murmur of voices, Craig watched the jury retire. Hope and triumph rose in his breast, for the bonds of guilt had securely fastened about the hapless Japanese boy.

The suspicion that in the regular course of investigation had included Craig now completely lifted from him.

Bettersworth, seemingly ready to burst with the suppression of his spleen, sat next to his lawyer waiting impatiently for the verdict which though it could not return his money, would at least prove that justice prevailed in the punishment of the thief. Yokokita, sullen and hopeless in this jargon of animosity about him, sat with eyes on the floor. Craig swept the audience and smiled condescendingly.

Yet, would the door of the jury room never open! Yokokita must be found guilty. This must close the case against further investigation.

At last the suspense was over; the judge paused in his conversation with the clerk, to read the verdict which affirmed the guilt of Yokokita. Craig, by this time a master of dissimulation, concealed his elation. After all, what did it matter if a miserable, solitary Jap like Yokokita—who had never had anything anyhow!—were to spend a few years in the penitentiary? Surely his own hopes, reputation and future, were of infinitely greater importance. He would resign his position in due time, dig out the hidden packet and be off for other climes. The blood began to flow more normally through his veins. Mopping his brow, he breathed with an acute sense of relief, and turned to leave the courtroom. As he did so, an icy hand clutched his heart and the room seemed to spin round crazily. The thing that he had feared subconsciously, had, in fact, been his obsession all through the days and nights of agony since the hour of his theft, had come to pass. The memory of that strange, mysterious, phantasy-like witness, the old man with the beaver hat, had been with him every hour. There, not ten feet away, just behind the railing, sat the wierd old man himself!

Craig uttered a startled cry and sank limply into the chair he had just vacated. Bettersworth turned on him.

"What is it now?" he demanded.

The guilty clerk, with protruding eyeballs, gazed into the eyes of his conscience—the fateful witness. Under the uncompromising stare of his silent accuser, Craig's spirit crumbled like sand. Two officers were already leading Yokokita toward the hold-over. The old man near the rail gathered his hat and pad of paper under his arm, preparing to rise, presumably to address the judge.

Craig's nerves gave way beneath the impending exposure, and he jumped to his feet. In a piercing, hysterical voice, his words tumbling over one another, he poured forth his confession to the startled court. The astounded judge ordered him into custody.

Under the fearful touch of the law, Craig sank in a huddle. Dazed and motionless he heard the methodical, technical reopening of the case. The tense, full silence of the room beat in upon him like muffled hammers.

Dumbly, he was dragged toward the shining bars of the hold-over where Yokokita stood with mouth open. On the way, they passed the old man of the beaver hat. He was writing on the pad of paper, supported by his flat-top hat.

"Good morning, Mr. Donaldson," offered one of the officers at Craig's side. The old man of the beaver hat gravely bowed his head to the salutation, and Craig cringed before the austerity of his noble face.

"Brian Donaldson, the novelist," explained the officer to his companion on Craig's left. "He's blind as a bat, but he goes poking around everywhere—pawnshops, and bookstores and police courts. Always alone—never seems to lose his way."

Then the two officers of the court turned to their charge in dismay, for he had collapsed to unconsciousness in their rough grasp.

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