"The Deluge"

POULTRY NOTES

ITEMS THAT WILL HELP OUR READERS WITH THEIR PROBLEMS AND HELP THEM KEEP UP WITH THE BUSINESS

By Polk T. Bramble

In the case of no other domestic live stock does the same wonderful opportunity exist for extensive, low-cost reproduction as is true in the poultry breeding field. First, is the fact that it requires only the short period of three weeks for the chick embryo to develop into a full-grown chick and exclude itself from the egg shell, ready for life's battles and opportunities. Second, is the fact that eggs sold for hatching purposes can be shipped hundreds of miles, in fact several thousand miles and still they will hatch well.

Neither of the foregoing outstanding facts or advantages is true of other farm animals. In these important respects poultry has a monopoly, as compared with horses, cattle, swine and sheep. There is the further advantage that eggs intended for incubation can be kept several days, in fact twoor three weeks and still will give profitable hatches, especially under favorable weather conditions and when such eggs are given proper attention.

In spite of the enormous increase in the sale of day-old or baby chicks, immense quantities of eggs-for-hatching still are sold, and these days by far the greater number of them are shipped by parcel post, though still very large numbers no doubt are sent forward by express.

Is Kent or Queen or Queen Anne's county taking full advantage of its opportunity in this business? We doubt it very much.

Dr. Raymond Pearl, while in charge of the poultry-breeding investigations at Maine ,attached unusual weight to the winter production of hens and pullets as a measure of their innate productive ability. As regards the Maine Station Flock he states that "Birds fall into three-well-defined classes in respect to winter egg production. These include (a) birds with high winter records, (b) birds with low winter records and (c) birds that do not lay at all during the winter period The division point between a and b for the Barred Plymouth Rocks used in these experiments falls at a production of about 30 eggs."

After taking up the work at Amherst Dr. Goodale was not long in reaching the conclusion that this theory did not fit the case, at least so far as the station flock of Reds was concerned, inheritance of production being a much more complex matter. Dr. Pearl's confidence in winter production as a measure of a hen's innate ability to produce eggs led him to state that "The intelligent breeder trap nesting his flock not over three months in the year can make practically just as rapid progress in breeding for increased egg production as his neighbor who trap nests twelve months in the year."

There was a time, not so long ago, when even fairly experienced chick raisers felt that if they hatched fifty percent of the eggs set and raised fifty percent of the chicks hatched, they were doing moderately well. Such losses now would be considered intolerable, even for beginners. A couple of years ago 300 farmers in a middle-western state, who were keeping accurate records with their poultry flocks, reported an average chick loss of 20 percent, from the incubator to maturity. That wasn't too bad, considering that the average was secured under all sorts of conditions and with all sorts of equipment, but it is plain that to realize that average many of the farmers kept their losses down around 10 percent.

Speaking generally, 10 percent. is about as high as the mortality needs to run these times if the grower exercises reasonable discretion in selecting his brooding equipment and makes use of the practical knowledge now available regarding the common causes of loss among chicks. Success in this line is no longer the painfully acquired art that it used to be, but is chiefly a matter of willingness to work faithfully and to follow instructions. Chick raisers can still suffer heavy losses in their broods if they are indifferent to the sources from which their chicks are obtained, or the eggs from which the chicks are to be hatched, or if they are slack and careless in their methods. But as a general thing, any grower who has a high percent. of loss ought to consider himself and his methods under serious suspicion.

The complete and well-balanced development of the poultry industry in a community depends upon the standardization of breeds of poultry, so that there shall be a breed for every purpose, also for special climatic conditions—and upon the proper use of such breeds. The preponderance of Rhode Island Reds in New England at the present time, and the greatly increased ratio of White Leghorns, does not necessarily mean that Rhode Island Reds and White Leghorns are here in excessive numbers, and that many stocks of either or both of these breeds should be replaced by stocks of some other breed. But it does mean that the developments which require fowls of different types are not taking place. And, as the Leghorn is primarily an egg type fowl, and the Rhode Island Red is the dual-purpose breed having the closest relation to egg types, and the least of meat quality among dual-purpose fowls, no argument is necessary to show that the supply of "nearby" poultry and eggs is not of the same kind that it was when the poultry of this section was predominantly of the heavier dual-purpose and the meat breeds.

With many, indeed, attention to this matter has passed the stage of inquiry, and they have been considering for some time ways and means of securing Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte or Brahma stock, and invariably they find that every little stock of these breeds is to be had in that section. The dearth of these breeds, which a generation ago constituted probably 90 percent. of the poultry in New England, is amazing—until the reasons for it are considered; then it appears as a natural cansequence of conditions.

Much the same conditions that result in the production of soft-shelled eggs are responsible for blood clots, also for eversion of the oviduct and other ovarian disorders. When any of these troubles appear, follow the suggestions given for the prevention of soft-shelled eggs. Also, reduce the amount of corn, if this is being heavily fed, and supply a less stimulating ration. Usually that means reducing the proportion of meat scrap fed, particularly if you have been doubling up on the animal part of the ration by supplying milk in some form without a proportionate reduction in the percentage of meat scrap.

Many feeders are at a loss to know how to figure on milk as a substitute for meat scrap. A recent statement from the Poultry Department of the University of Missouri gives two gallons of milk as the equivalent of one pound of meat scrap. That means that 100 hens, as ordinarily fed, must drink four gallons of skinn milk daily to get the same amount of protein they would secure in a dry mash containing 20 percent of meat scrap of average quality. With that amount of milk, no meat scrap at all is needed, but in proportion as milk consumption falls below that average, the protein deficiency must be made up by the addition of meat scrap, or the nutritive ratio will suffer.

Eggs usually reach the lowest price for the year during this month and next, and the producer's best salesmanship is required to realize profitable prices. One of the best possible markets for eggs just now is the home table. If producers will now make it a practice to increase their egg consumption to the practical limit, giving proper attention to variety in cooking in order to avoid tiring of them, and f liberal supplies are put dwn in water glass for use next fall and winter when fresh eggs will be worth nearly double what they bring now, the spring egg slump can be greatly modified.

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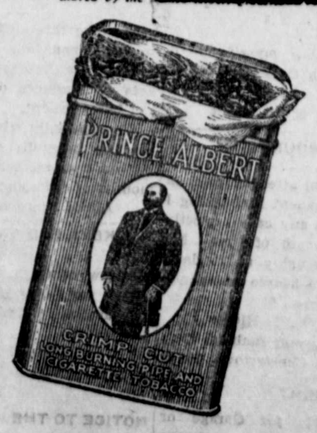

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