

POULTRY WEST OF THE ROCKIES

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Poultry West of the Rockies by Frank B. Clewette

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FRANK B. CLEWETTE

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POULTRY WEST OF THE ROCKIES

BY FRANK B. CLEWETTE

This Book is the experience, in a condensed form, of hundreds of poultrymen in the West, and is designed to point out the obstacles to poultry-raising, and how to overcome them.

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This book is not infallible—nothing is. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

POULTRY WEST OF THE ROCKIES.



CHAPTER I.

POULTRY IN THE GOLDEN WEST.

"Will the poultry business pay in the West?" and "Why are there not more large poultry plants?" and similar questions, meet us very often from people coming from the East, and indeed many who have lived west of the divide for years cannot yet understand why we should send hundreds of thousands of dollars each year across the mountains to enrich our prosperous Kansas cousins.

There are many reasons why these things are so, and one is the very prevalent idea that the chicken business is a very small thing, and hardly worth the time of a man of any ability, but just fit for the puttering of the women and children, to get a little pocket money out of.

But what of the business of one man in Central California, who, during one year, has sold 40,000 eggs, none lower than \$5.00 per 100, and many single settings at \$2.00 for fifteen? Is that a business worthy of a man? The same can be done in almost any neighborhood, but remember the old advice of Poor Richard, "He that by the plow would thrive, himself must either hold or drive."

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The total product of the poultry of the United States is greater than the output of any other one class of products in the industrial world.

There are some sections of our great country which produce the bulk of our cotton, other parts produce wheat, others corn or sugar, or gold or iron; but the old hen is found in nearly every farm yard from coast to coast, and few city and village homes are without a showing of our feathered friends. From this fact, which no one will deny, you will see that though the output seems small in each section, yet there is such a great number and such a thorough distribution of the egg-producer that the total production is simply stupendous.

There is no industry with which we are familiar, connected with the agricultural and stock-raising interests, which will yield so ready an income and pay for itself so quickly as the poultry business.

We had a talk with a man not long ago who is handling a lot of hens, just for eggs for the market. We asked him how many hens a man should keep, to sell eggs and the by-product of cockerels and old hens, to make a living, and he replied, "Six hundred layers, if he doesn't live too high."

"One year," he went on, "when I was working up to my present number," (600 layers) "and I had to keep all my old hens, as I did not want to reduce my stock, they netted me \$1.50 per hen, and one year I cleared \$2.00 for every hen I had."

Hens of the grade this man has can be bought at an average price of 50 cents apiece, and can you put \$300 in any other legitimate interest you know of, and with your time devoted to it, net you \$1200 a year, or \$900, or even \$600?

Do not for a minute suppose that a man who has but little knowledge of poultry-raising and not much strength for hard work, or, worse still, a very great disinclination for it, can

buy a lot of hens, throw out some wheat to them each day, and at the end of the year enjoy himself looking at the good fat deposit in the bank, for he won't have it, and the chances are he won't have as many birds as he started with.

The care of poultry calls for the same kind of patience as a woman's house work, from the fact that it's never done; but you must go right over the same old routine day after day, and there's a great deal of hard, disagreeable work about it. In fact, you will come to the opinion of the boy wading in the pond, when the snapping turtle got hold of his toe, "you've got no soft snap."

One thinks it a waste of business ability to bother with a few hens. You will find, if you try it on a scale large enough to make a living from it, that as one well posted man remarked, "The poultry business demands a knowledge of more different kinds of business and a more varied line of information than any other business in the world." This may sound extreme, but the measure of success reached depends very much on the careful thought and study devoted to the work and the careful attention to detail. Then there is the adaptability of the man. In many lines of industry a man may succeed fairly well, if he make a careful study of the needs of the business and "stays with it"; but the successful poultryman is somewhat like the true artist, in one way—he is "born and not made." If a man does not like chickens and is always ready to throw something at every hen he sees, and can't see any difference in them, he had better leave the business alone entirely, for there are enough disagreeable things about it for the man who has a liking for his birds, but if the work is all drudgery he will not make as much out of it as the man who takes a deep interest in his work, and knows many of his flock personally, and by name or number.

There are many books published on the subject of poultry-

keeping and feeding, and though they are published east of the mountains, and there are some things in them not exactly applicable to our conditions, yet the articles on feeding, mating, breeding, etc., will work out the same west as east, and the reports of experiments made at the different State experiment stations are very instructive reading, and may be had by writing to the director of the station in the State where such experiments are made, or to the Agricultural Department at Washington.

Don't be afraid of getting too much information, for when a man thinks he doesn't need to study and read on the line of business in which he is engaged, be it what it may, then he has about reached the limit of his ability. We do not mean to convey the idea that you must follow all the advice you read, or even believe all of it, for there are many queer things put in print. This is just as true of what you see in the poultry journals, as it is of the general press. One man made the remark once, that he had been fooled so many times that he didn't believe anything he heard, and only half what he actually saw. Don't take anything for granted that you see in print, till you see if it will stand the test of a good hard application of common sense.

Here is where the test of the up-to-date poultryman, as to general information, comes in. If he sees a new remedy or a different style of feeding, or a new formula mentioned, he should know about what elements they contain, and whether they are in the right proportions, for the needs of his birds, and just about what the effect will be, and he should know, on the first symptom of trouble, what remedy to apply to remove the cause.

We notice in a report from the Rhode Island experiment station, that one writer says that fowls need no condition powders at all, and we hear the same thing very often in our

own talks with poultrymen, but that depends very much on conditions.

For instance, in Rhode Island, it is more than likely that at the time the experiment was tried, the birds had access to ground where there was grass, or weeds, or both, growing, and with the dandelion, mints, burdock, etc., that they could pick up, the varied elements conducive to health could be found, or if they had no range, then the variety would be found in the supply fed to them; and again, the writer says in the same article, but on another subject, that "a single test proves nothing," and then, after reporting a single test in this respect, says that hens "need no condition powders of any kind."

An Eastern man who has never seen a Western summer, is not qualified to make such a sweeping assertion, and this is one of the occasions where Eastern advice is of little use to us, west of the divide.

During the dry season, the Western hen has almost no chance at all to get animal food, such as her Eastern sister gets in the grasshoppers, crickets, bugs, and worms, in such profusion, or the medicinal herbs and roots that combine with her other foods to supply all the elements that a hen needs for the production of eggs and the preservation of health, and the man who does not supply these elements in the time of need does not meet with the greatest measure of success possible to him.

Do you realize that the egg we so unconcernedly expect every old hen to lay as nearly every day as possible, no matter how we treat her, is one of the most complex productions we get from any source? It is an almost perfect food in the most concentrated form, and has in itself the embryo chick, and only needs the application of the right amount of heat, for the proper time, to produce the ancestry in miniature, and it's all

there when we pick the egg up from the nest where Bidly has so uncomplainingly left it for us.

Then see to it that the hen of average weight who is expected to produce one-fiftieth of her weight every time she lays an egg, and if she lays but 150 eggs in a year, still has produced three times her own weight, has the proper food to do it with. Some say that hens must have a good long rest from laying. This all depends on their digestive organs. Pens of hens confined, have produced as high as 289 eggs in a year and ended the test in good condition, and the 300-egg hen is coming, and our Western country can produce her, if any one can.