

HOUSE AND FARM.

About Chickens. Mrs. Mary C. West gives the readers of the Mobile Register some useful hints on the treatment of fowls, drawn from her own experience, and Professor Stelle, the agricultural editor makes comments on some points, which we produce: I have made up my mind to write you a chapter on chickens; but that does not imply that I am going to tell you all about what manner of creatures chickens are, and how they are produced, for I am writing to editors who must understand something about these things, and for farmer's wives and daughters who know a thing or two as well as I do myself. I don't want to write for any body else—don't intend to do it—and therefore I may confine myself to a few practical hints, which I consider new, and which I hope to make of service to that class of readers for whom they are intended. Setting.—I always find it best to set hens under shelter and on the ground. If the last is not practicable I have a green sod taken up thin and placed under the nest. This is very important, for the earth contains heat enough to keep the eggs in good condition while the hen is off in quest of food, something which boards or mere litter under the nest, would not be sure to do. I make my nests of straw pounded or bruised finely with the poll of an axe, usually laying it on a smoothly-cut stump of a tree to pound it. Testing Eggs.—On the evening of the sixth day after setting the hen, I go to the nest with a lighted candle, and holding the eggs up between it and my eyes, carefully observe their appearance. If they look clear and red I know they are sterile, and so take them from the nest; they will not yet have been spoiled by the hen's sitting upon them. The fertile eggs containing birds, will appear dark; that is, they will show no light through them. It is great folly to let a hen sit all through her term on sterile eggs, finally converting them into "rotten eggs," when they may be so easily detected by this simple process. Assisting Nature.—About a week before the time for hatching, in dry summer weather, I go to the nest when the hen is off, and sprinkle the eggs pretty thoroughly with a little warm water. I find this a great aid to nature in the process of hatching, as it has a tendency to soften the shells. It applies equally to all kinds of poultry. Roosting.—I find that young chickens should have a clean and well ventilated roosting place. It is for them to sit on the bare ground. The ground of their house should be thoroughly cleaned at least once a week, by scraping it out to the depth of, say two inches and supplying the place with fresh, loose earth. The loose earth acts as an absorbent, and keeps the house pure and the chickens in a healthy condition. [And the loose earth removed once a week from a large flock of chickens is worth almost as much as the poultry, for it is one of the most excellent fertilizers that could be applied to plants. It should be well stirred together and carefully housed until the time for using it is at hand. If convenient, to cover it closely in boxes or barrels, all the better. We have tested quite a variety of fertilizers this season, but none with results better than those shown by the scrapings of our chicken-house.—Ed.] Feeding.—Very young chickens will have to be fed regularly until they are able to run about in quest of food. In their case most persons in this section use corn-meal slightly wetted, but experience has taught me to believe that corn "grits," given dry is best suited to their wants. I feed my young chickens regularly four times each day. [In regions further North and less favored for poultry-growing, it is usual to feed young birds regularly, but sparingly, about every two hours throughout the day; that is, where persons make poultry-growing a business. Adult poultry is fed twice a day—morning and evening—and corn, wheat, oats and barley, with various garden vegetables, finely chopped, generally make up the feed. In our

experience we have found them to do as well as could be desired on boiled sweet potatoes mashed and mixed with a small proportion of corn meal—about one part of the latter to four or five of the former. Irish potatoes, carrots, turnips, pumpkins, squashes, apples or peaches treated in the same way will be found to answer every purpose.—Ed.] Doctoring.—My chickens are never sick, consequently I have no doctoring to do. I think sickness among fowls is more the result of bad management than anything else; and that doctoring does more harm than good. Remove the cause and the effect will remove itself. I have, on several occasions, when chicken cholera was bad in my neighborhood, given, mixed in the food of my fowls, small proportions of powdered charcoal, oxide of iron and flour of sulphur. I never had a true case of cholera, but do not pretend to hold that the drugs administered should have credit for it. I rather think that keeping the houses clean and their floors well covered with fresh earth has been the medicine that saved my chickens. Manuring Corn, etc. Farmers mostly depend upon the decomposition of the grass stubble and roots, and upon lime, as a manure for the corn crop. We have no doubt that much valuable matter is thus rendered available to this crop; but we think every good farmer should provide himself with a portion of animal manure, to give the corn an early start. Composting in the hill supplies this want, and we are not sure but that those farmers who haul out their manure in the winter and spring, and thus apply it to the corn ground are getting the worth of their money, better than those who allow their manure to waste away in an exposed place until fall. It has been proven in many instances that guano and super-phosphates, have increased largely the yield of corn. The following method of raising a corn and potato crop on the same ground, might be tried on a small scale: A gentleman informed us, that one season when planting corn, he occasionally threw a few pieces of potatoes in the hills, which were covered with the corn. When he cut his corn he found a large hill of potatoes under the corn roots; though the corn where the potatoes grew appeared as good as the other hills. The corn crop is the most reliable and valuable of all others. Do not fail to plant a large quantity. Crows, it is said, will not light upon a corn field, if a string be stretched around the field. Chickens can be rendered nearly harmless by giving them plenty of corn. SOILING FOR DAIRY STOCK.—The question of soiling dairy stock seems just now to be claiming more than usual attention. So far as our observation has extended we find those who are most successful adopt a plan which is in reality a compromise between the old system and that of soiling. One great fault of the soiling system is a want of exercise enough to promote health. We tried it last season upon our dairy cows, by having them out in pasture and feeding them as much green corn as they would eat, and we think this as good a plan as any, and will suit many of our dairymen, who can readily keep in pasture during the summer. This plan will enable them to keep the same amount of stock the whole year. GRAHAM DODGERS.—Take one pint of buttermilk; stir into it one quart of Graham flour, and add a teaspoonful of soda dissolved in water; add to this 1 well beaten egg and a pinch of salt, with bolted flour enough to make a very stiff batter. Butter flat tins, and take out the batter with a large spoon in small cakes. Bake for twenty minutes, or until well browned, in a hot oven. Break in halves when eaten, and spread with butter—a nice relish for breakfast, lunch or tea. TO GLAZE SHIRTS.—To every quart of made starch add a teaspoonful of starch and one of white soap, scraped fine. Boil the starch, after adding hot water, until you have it as thick as you wish.

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