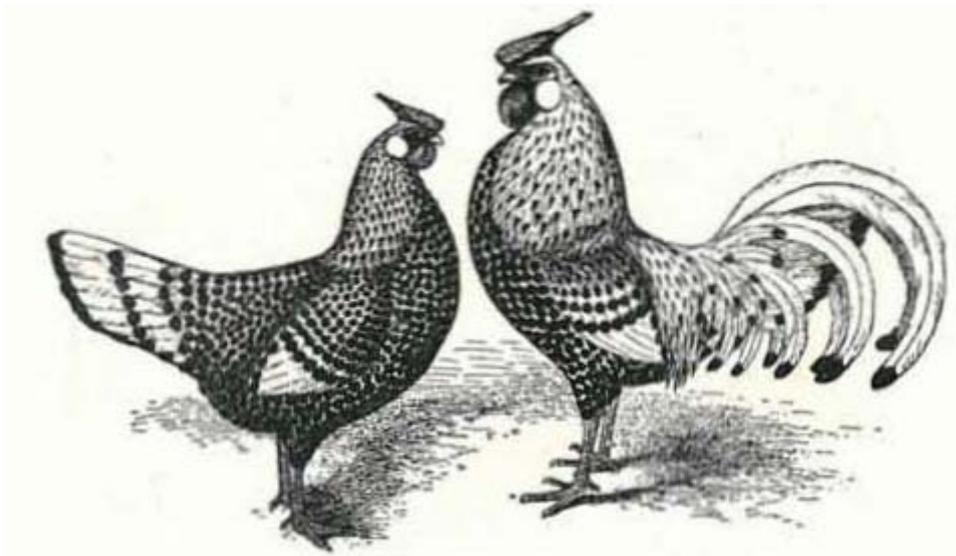


VINTAGE WORDS OF WISDOM

Poultry-Keeping

By

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Publishers' Foreword

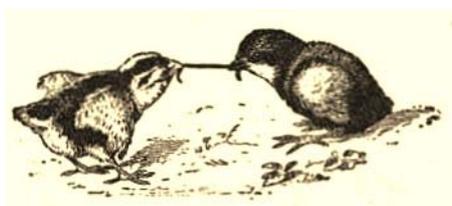
Keeping chickens is a very popular hobby today but it was just as popular in 1918, albeit for different reasons. In the early twentieth century keeping chickens was often a money-making enterprise that anyone with a small amount of land could undertake. However, it is clear from *Poultry-Keeping* that taking care to look after chickens and other poultry properly was vital, whether for profit or pleasure.

This vintage title is often amusing and quaint. For example, we love the advice to place a board above your cockerel's roost so that, when he stretches up in the early morning, he will strike his head and then be less likely to wake everyone with his crowing! On the other hand, poultry-keepers in 1918 were not squeamish about killing older and less productive birds and some of the remedies for ailing chickens are certainly not recommended today. While chickens were not regarded as pets, and a robust and practical approach is advocated by the authors, it is also clear that poultry-keepers of the time were fond of their birds and had great concern for their welfare.

The advice given is provided by acknowledged experts and it stands the test of time. There are wise words here on keeping chickens clean, well-fed and healthy, with regular reminders that chickens need space and time to scratch and forage for food themselves in order to stay well and productive. This is in a time before battery hens were crowded into tiny cages with no room to stretch their wings or have a dust bath. The authors also provide guidance on the breeds of birds to buy for different purposes – egg-laying, chickens for eating, showing, etc. – breeding and care of chicks, showing chickens (which was very popular in 1918), the business side of poultry-keeping, information on ailments and diseases, as well as advice on keeping other poultry such as ducks, geese, turkeys and guinea fowl (though the authors do not recommend keeping ostriches!).

We remind readers that this is a vintage title and that the advice and information may be out-of-date in some cases. Therefore, please read the book with this in mind and make sure you check with a vet or read modern publications before using any recommended remedies or following advice of a technical, scientific or medical nature. Also, some of the advice may offend modern sensibilities about animal welfare so please remember that this book was written nearly 100 years ago when they thought about such things differently.

We heartily recommend this book as an enjoyable and nostalgic read for anyone who has chickens, or who is thinking of keeping chickens as a hobby or as a backyard business. The illustrations are charming as well as informative, the text is engaging and describes a world in 1918 that is sometimes familiar and at other times very different. We have provided some explanation of terms no longer in common use but, in some cases, we have left it to the reader to discover what things like 'middlings' and 'meat graves' are (the internet will tell you).



VINTAGE WORDS OF WISDOM

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POULTRY-KEEPING

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Although the keeping of poultry is undoubtedly on the increase in the British Isles, a great deal more remains to be done before any marked decrease in our egg and poultry imports will be discernible. For years past the editors of poultry papers and others interested in the subject have advocated that all tenants of land, even though the plot be but a small garden attached to a house, should invest in a few fowls and raise sufficient eggs for their own consumption.

That this can be done on quite small spaces has been proved by hundreds of back-yarders, and the writers can also speak from personal experience of three pens of fowls, twenty-four in all, which have kept a large household in fresh eggs for the greater part of the year, and allowed a surplus to be put away weekly into water-glass [sodium silicate in aqueous solution] for consumption in the winter months, when their output was at its smallest.

Of course, to do this, poultry must be kept on a proper system, and that certainly is not to allow the birds to roam at their own sweet will, picking up what they can and drinking any foul water that they may happen to come across. Neither is it to throw food down for them whether they need it or not without system or regularity. Nor is it to keep them in houses where their sleeping quarters are seldom cleaned out, the droppings being allowed to accumulate for months before being taken away, and the whole place to become infested with insects.

This is not the poultry-keeping that will be advocated in the following chapters. We hope instead to be able to point out to readers how to keep their birds with profit and pleasure, so that they in turn may tell others, and thus enlarge the circle of poultry-keepers. It has been stated that we cannot hope to produce all the eggs that we require for home consumption and the many processes of manufacture for which they are now needed, but at least we can all do our share to keep in our own country some of the huge total of £8,394,524 paid in 1912 to the foreigner for eggs, and, moreover, in doing so ensure a fresher egg on our breakfast-tables.

A warning is perhaps advisable to those who contemplate poultry-keeping. Begin in a small way, and increase the head of stock carried as knowledge is gained. From experience as editors of *The Feathered World*, we know how many people give up disheartened, because they start on too large a scale; and their experience not being equal to the task, the proper care of their fowls gets beyond them, and disaster follows.

Another point to remember is that well-bred stock costs no more to feed than mongrels; and that, though the initial outlay for pure breeds may be greater, when the surplus stock has to be disposed of the prices realised will be higher than for nondescripts. It is a mistaken idea, but yet one hard to kill, that the greater the mongrel the more profitable the fowl; and it cannot be too strongly urged that pure stock, or first crosses selected for a definite purpose, are both better to look at and more paying to keep.

Before closing this introductory note we wish to express our deep indebtedness to the poultry

experts, and other contributors of *The Feathered World*, by whose writings we have profited in producing what we trust may prove a useful handbook to amateur poultry-keepers.

Chapter II

HOUSES AND RUNS

The late Mr A. Comyns, in his book "Poultry for the People," well says: "There are four primary necessities to ensure good laying. These are: first, good housing; second, good feeding; third, proper means of digestion; and fourth, reasonable exercise."

Cheap Houses — Into the details of poultry-house construction it is not necessary to go at length; but instead we will furnish a few illustrations of cheap forms of houses, and leave readers to settle the details according to their individual circumstances. Good houses can be purchased at reasonable prices by those who desire to do so. They can be built even more cheaply by those who are handy enough to be able to use a saw, a hammer, and some nails, and have facilities for obtaining match-boarding at cheap rates; and even those who are unfortunate in this respect can purchase large packing-cases, sugar-boxes, or something of that kind, which may, with little trouble or expense, be converted into a good house for a few birds. Still, on the principle that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well, we advise the poultry-keeper to commence with a house that shall not be an eyesore to himself or his neighbours. Let it be neatly finished off, and for comfort's sake let it be one that can be entered for purposes of cleaning without excessive stooping.

Fig. 1 — Combined sleeping-house (A) and scratching-shed (B). C, roof hinged to open; aperture covered with netting; *aa*, sliding shutters to cover *bb*. A screen, sliding in runners, may be used to cover *cc*.

Important Points — Quoting again from Mr Comyns, we will note a few primary rules which demand attention. In the first place, the roosting house must be suited to the number of birds kept. It may be taken as a rough rule that each bird should have at least ten cubic feet of air in the house. Working this out, we find that the smallest house for six fowls is four feet square and four feet high, while for twenty birds the house should be at least six feet square and six feet high. With such small dimensions as these, great attention to ventilation is necessary; but care must be taken that ventilation is given without draught. This may most readily be secured by the use of two sheets of perforated zinc, with a space between each sheet over each ventilating opening. These openings should be placed as high as possible at each end of the house, so that the air comes in quite above the birds' heads, and becomes heated before *it* reaches them. It is well to provide the ventilators with a sliding shutter, so that the amount of air admitted may be regulated according to the temperature and the number of fowls in the house.

Fig. 2 — Type of house which is very convenient where room is limited.