A TEXAS CO-OPERATIVE POULTRY COMMUNITY.

By Milo Hastings.

In locating the 150,000 egg incubator which I have just completed at Port O'Connor(Texas, I have been dominated by two ideas. The first is the advantage of community specialization; the second, of co-operation in buying supplies and selling the product.

In my former work at the Kansas Experiment Station and with the Federal Department of Agriculture, I learned that co-operative poultry marketing is thoroughly practical as is abundantly proven by the example of Denmark, where, under favorable able conditions, a plucky people have, by co-operative marketing, built up the most wonderful egg trade in the world. The Danish eggs are gathered by regular wagons, bought by weight, carefully inspected and severe fines are imposed on the sellers of bad specimens. As a result, Danish eggs are recognized as the finest in the world, and command in the London market a higher price than the nearby English product.

Later in my travels I learned that the great majority of successful poultry farms in this country were located in a limited number of communities. Moreover, these communities all specialize in a single branch of poultry farming, and often on a single breed of poultry. This at Little Compton, R. I., Rhode Island Red hens are kept for eggs; in the South Shore district of Massachusetts, soft roasting chickens are the chief products, while at Vineland, New Jersey, and at Haywards and Petaluma, California, White Leghorns egg farming is the main industry of the regions.

A study of the history of these communities shows that they were not planned in advance. Some man started in the poultry business and succeeded; others imitated him and they succeeded; soon the group became talked of and outsiders came to see, and, being convinced, moved to the locality and imitated the methods of the successful pioneers.

Clearly the natural conditions must have been favorable. But it is equally clear that once a few practical poultrymen get the business going in a favorable locality the chance of success for the new comer is greatly enhanced. There is no form of instructions so effective as the demonstration farm, and the beginner in the poultry community is surrounded with successful farms, methods of which have been adapted to that particular locality.

In all the communities referred to active associations have also developed, which hold instructive meetings ,and some of which engage in co-operative marketing. In this respect, however, the older communities are not what they should be, for they evolved by accident, and shrewd individuals or corporations were more far-seeing than the community as a whole.

At Petaluma the feed supply is practically controlled by one man who has become a millionaire from the business. The egg situation is almost as completely dominated by the largest commission house on the Pacific Coast. It proves an easy matter for such established firms to crush young co-operative efforts by temporarily under-bidding.

The writer has long believed that poultry community could be founded in a carefully selected location, and by the establishment of co-operative buying and selling at the start secure to poultrymen greater advantages than exist in the present communities.

While poultryman at the Kansas Experiment Station in 1905 I conceived the idea of the present Hastings Hatchery or forced draft system of incubation. At that time there was little demand for a large sized hatching plant. Later I returned to my invention because of the development of the day-old chick trade and my discovery of the success of the poultry community.

The shipping of baby chicks by express has, the last few years, been the spectacular feature of the poultry business. Already hundreds of successful hatcheries are in operation. Some half-dozen plants claim to have passed the 100,000 mark and the Bihn Hatchery of Petaluma has an actual capacity of 165,000 eggs every three weeks.

I spent from 1909 to 1911 in the development of my revolutionary forced draft system of incubation. Success crowned my efforts, first with a 10,000-egg machine in Brooklyn and the next season with a 30,000-egg plant at Muskogee, Oklahoma.

My forced draft hatchery compares to a small incubator as a modern cold storage plant does to a kitchen refrigerator. The whole building is insulated. The hatching chamber is man size and the eggs placed in from ten to thirty layers instead of one, giving immense economy of space. The air is moved by exhaust fans instead of being dependent on gravity drafts which are wholly governed by outside temperature. The evaporation or "moisture" is under absolute control and not fluctuated by every passing shower. The attendant enters the incubator to work among the eggs or hatching chicks.

The success of the Muskogee plant resulted in numerous offers to build other private plants, but seeing the advantage such a hatchery would be in the launching of a co-operative poultry community I prefer to use my invention to aid this long cherished undertaking, and after many thousands of miles of travel, I found a suitable location and made arrangements to build a hatchery as the hub of my long cherished co-operative community.

The object of locating such a community on the Gulf Coast of Texas is to take advantage of the mild winter climate for the production of early broilers which always command a fancy price before the bulk of the crop comes into market. I think that the Texas Coast has an advantage over the Southern States farther east in that grain is more abundant and the rainfall not so excessive.

Not only is the mild climate of great advantage in the rearing of baby chicks, but the winter eggs on the Texas Coast, being produced under similar climatic conditions to that the spring chickens of the Northern States yield larger hatches and more vigorous chicks than can be secured from winter eggs laid by the shut-in hens of the Northern poultry plants.

In short, we have every advantage of California but, whereas, the Pacific Coast market is limited, the Gulf Coast of Texas is fifteen hundred miles nearer the center of population and our surplus can be sent to Chicago or New York, hence we will have no no danger of over-production.

Time alone does not spoil eggs, but rather filth and heat. Cold storage eggs eight months old are better eggs than those that have lain for forty-eight hours in a hot kitchen in July.

Petaluma eggs are used on the Pacific Coast from San Diego to Alaska. This past season, when the severe weather kept Eastern eggs unusually high, Petaluma sent a shipment of six cars of eggs to New York City.

Think of it! These hens were fed on corn hauled over the Rocky Mountains from Nebraska, and the resulting eggs shipped back again across the continent, competed profitably with the Eastern nearby product.

It is cheaper to take the eggs to the consumer than to bring the climate to the hen!

Freight rates on eggs are a comparatively small item, something between two and three cents a dozen, from South Texas to New York, or about 10 per cent of their value. It requires from five to eight days to send eggs in refrigerator cars or steamers from Port O'Connor to the farthest markets of the North and East. Eggs properly handled from the time they are laid will not be appreciably injured by such shipment.

But the problem of putting the scientifically produced and handled Texas egg "fresh laid" in the New York or Boston market at a time when the New England poultryman's wife is using egg extract to make pumpkin pies is clearly a job requiring co-operative effort. It will take 50,000 hens to enable us to ship eggs in car-load lots, and that means twenty-five with two thousand hens each, which is a fair number for one family to care for without hired labor.

The hatchery we have already established will care for five times that large a poultry community and we have suitable soil for one fifty times as large, all we need is the people, and we are getting them.

The Port O'Connor Hatchery began operation October 1. We expect to run steadily until May. The most profitable hatching in this latitude should be from January to March. Chicks at this time will require about the same equipment and care as April and May hatched chicks of the Northern States.

For the present season we are bringing eggs for hatching in case lots from all over the Southwest, but another year we hope to have enough local hens to supply the hatchery. The chicks will be sold at the usual rates to outsiders and shipped throughout the State.

To the co-operators, the chicks will be sold at actual cost, or the members may bring their own eggs to the plant to have them hatched, paying their pro rata share of actual operating expense.

By the plan of organization this hatchery, together with all other features of the industry that can be more economically so handled than by individuals will be co-operative.

This will include the purchase of all supplies, including lumber, fencing and feed; the manufacture, with power driven machinery of brooders, fixtures, shipping crates, etc.; the purchase of outside breeding stock; the hatching of chicks for members and for sale; the selling of all market eggs and poultry and such breeding stock as members offer for sale in this fashion; and last but not least, the maintaining of a reading room, the holding of meetings and lectures, and the conducting of an experimental and demonstration farm.

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK.

Addressed to the ocean, these words voice one of the most beautiful of all poetic fancies. Spoken of the soil, they express one of the most important of all practical ideals. It is the breaking of soil, rather than the breaking of sea waves, which now interests us most.

The Ruralist has repeatedly discussed the reasons, time and direct results of fall breaking. Deep breaking is one of the things we have urged almost as persistently as subscribing for the Ruralist. Now, we propose more particularly to consider methods and general or permanent results.

The first point we wish to impress is that the advantages of deep breaking are so generally recognized that even those farmers who never practice it acknowledge their mistake. Their constantly repeated excuse is lack of power. They admit that mere scratching of the surface soil in the common way is faulty and unsatisfactory. Their only justification is that most Southern soils are hard and stiff, requiring more power and better implements than small farmers can supply. There is, however, a class of farmers who still either fail to admit the advantages of deeper breaking or are not sufficiently impressed to make serious effort at better work. For the special benefit of these we present a few statistics which should open the eyes of the most purblind stand-patter for present shiftless methods.

Mere individual comparisons of results from good and bad breaking fail to touch action nerves of these people. We offer more general and detailed evidence.

It will be admitted that one-horse breaking, as a rule, means shallow and inferior preparation. Notwithstanding this commonly-accepted fact the South remains—for reasons not now important—a section of one-horse plows and plowing. Farther North, soils in cultivation as long, originally less fertile and less favored by climate, are almost invariably broken by two-horse, or more powerful, plows. Other differences in farm practice in the two sections are less fundamental. They bear more on detail of method, resulting from other local conditions, rather than to difference in application of principles. We will compare the average yields per acre of several crops standard in both sections for the last ten-year-period reported by the National Department of Agriculture:

Corn.

New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, 33.6 bushels. North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, 12.9.

Oats.

The same States, 33.3, against 15.7 bushels.

Irish Potatoes.

New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, 104.5 bushels. North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, 12.9.

Tobacco.

Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, 1,539 pounds. North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, 637 pounds. The tobacco of the different sections is used for different purposes and quality rather than quantity is aimed at, still as this fact is true of each section the comparison remains approximately correct.

Here are the bald, unpleasant facts shown by these figures: An acre of average old land in the East Atlantic States yields nearly three times as much corn, more than twice as many oats, half again as many potatoes and considerably more than double as much tobacco as land naturally equally as good produces in the South Atlantic States. The chief cause for this vast difference in production lies in the difference in breaking the land —the two-horse plow against the one-horse. In one case the soil is really broken, in the other, its surface is merely scratched.

Even where better implements are in use in our section the old fear is too dominant and we allow the two-horse turn-plow, the disk and the traction plows to do only half the work that should be demanded of them.

Break, break, break the soil before further neglect breaks down.—Southern Rualist.

CHICKENS WERE SATISFIED.

Hiram: Them's awful puny little plants you've got in your garden. Are you sure your seed was good?

Suburbs: Good! Why, say, the chickens were crazy about them.