

A Perennial Fever.

THE world hears much of the dangers of typhoid and yellow and scarlet fever, and the skill of physicians is ever employed to reduce those dangers to a minimum; but in every country, at all seasons of the year, there is a fever that numbers its victims by the thousand, and yet no doctor has ever prescribed for it, nor is there any drug in the pharmacopœia that will alleviate it.

•The malady to which I refer is hen fever.

If a city woman intends marrying a city man, and then moving out a little way into the country, as she values her peace of mind, let her make sure that he is immune. Unless, indeed, both are prepared to come down with it at once. For it is unlike all other fevers in that a man and his wife may have it together and be happy; but if he or she have it alone, then woe be to that house.

The germs of hen fever are carried in a chance conversation, in a picture of gallinaceous activity, in the perusal of a poultry-book. A man hears or looks or reads, and the mischief is done. The subtle poison is in his blood, although he knows it not.

Hen fever takes various forms. With some it is manifested in a desire to keep a few blooded fowls and breed for points; with another, to keep a few birds for the sake of fresh eggs and broilers; but in whatsoever form it come, it will cause the upheaval of its victim's most cherished plans and habits.

He may have been an ardent admirer of Shakespeare, and in the evenings it has been his wont to read aloud to his wife while she knitted; but now, little recking what she does, he reads to himself "Farm Poultry" or "The Care of Hens," or—and this is the second stage of the disease—he reads aloud to her that hens cannot thrive without plenty of gravel, that cracked wheat is better than whole corn for growing pullets, that the best way to cure a hen of eating her own eggs is to fill one with mustard, etc.

Time was when he had an opinion on politics, on finance, on literature, on the thousand and one things that make for conversation, and his neighbors dropped in to hear him talk engagingly of what he had read or seen; but now, when they come, he tells them that his brown Leghorn hen laid twenty eggs in twenty-five days, while his buff Cochon laid only eight in the same time; that his white Plymouth Rock is crop-bound, and his Wyandotte rooster has the pip.

Lucky indeed is his wife if he stick to the good old way of hatching chickens by hens instead of kerosene-oil; for if he get an incubator she had better get a divorce. How many homes have been wrecked by patent incubators will never be known.

But even if the fevered one stick to the natural method of hatching, there will be many times when his wife will wonder why she left a comfortable and sociable home to spend her evenings alone; for he will be in the hen-house, setting hens, or washing soiled eggs, or divesting nestlings of the reluctant shell, or dusting his whole flock

with the snuff-like insecticide, or kerosening their roosts.

With some the fever never abates; with some it is intermittent; some have it hardest in the spring of the year, when hens are laying their prettiest, and profits may be figured in money as well as on paper. But whether it be light or heavy, hen fever will run its course without let or hindrance; and, as I have hinted, happy is the wife who comes down with it simultaneously with her husband; for, though their neighbors will shun them as they would a deadly pestilence, yet they will be company for each other, and will prate ceaselessly, yet cheerily, upon the best foods for laying hens, the best exposure for coops, how many hens can live in one house with best results, when a chicken should be weaned of bread, what breed of hens is least idiotic, and kindred topics.

As for me, I am free to come and go among hens; to look on their markings with unmoved eye; to view their output with normal pulse; to hear "the cock's shrill clarion" without pricking up my ears; to read of the latest thing in incubators without turning a hair: for I have survived the fever; I am an immune.

Charles Battell Loomis.

A' Ordinary Man.

My mother thought I 's smart 's a whip

When I was still a kid;

And so did I. 'T was long afore

I waked, but wake I did;

And see that 't was in her, not me,

That estimate began;

That after all I 'm what you 'd call

A' ordinary man.

I fooled my wife too. 'Spose 't was love

That made 'em both so blind;

But now 'f I say I 'm no great shakes,

She says she likes that kind.

She seems contented too, and yit

She ought be'n rich and gran',

And not the wife all through her life

Of a' ordinary man.

This little gal upon my knee,

Her dad, you may depen',

She thinks is one o' the 'way-way-ups

Among the sons o' men.

When she finds out—she 'll love me still,

Though on a different plan;

Fer find she must that I am just

A' ordinary man.

By gum, there 's times when Providence

Just rubs it in! No paint

Can't cover up the spots. You see

What y' ought to be but ain't.

To think what you should do fer 'em

And then think what you can:

It makes you sore 'at y' ain't no more

'N a' ordinary man!

Robert Mowry Bell.