

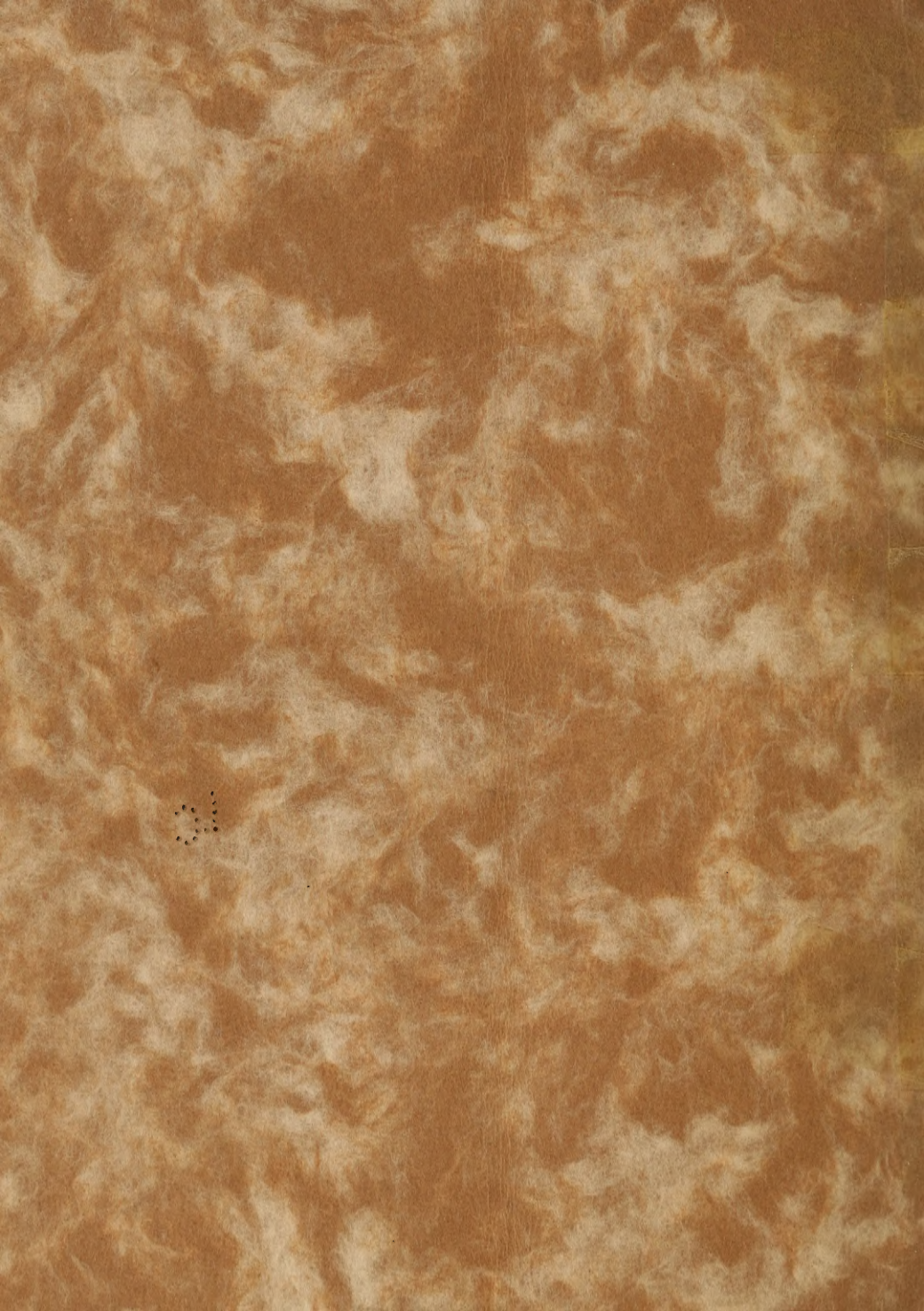
CANARIES

"Mating and Breeding"



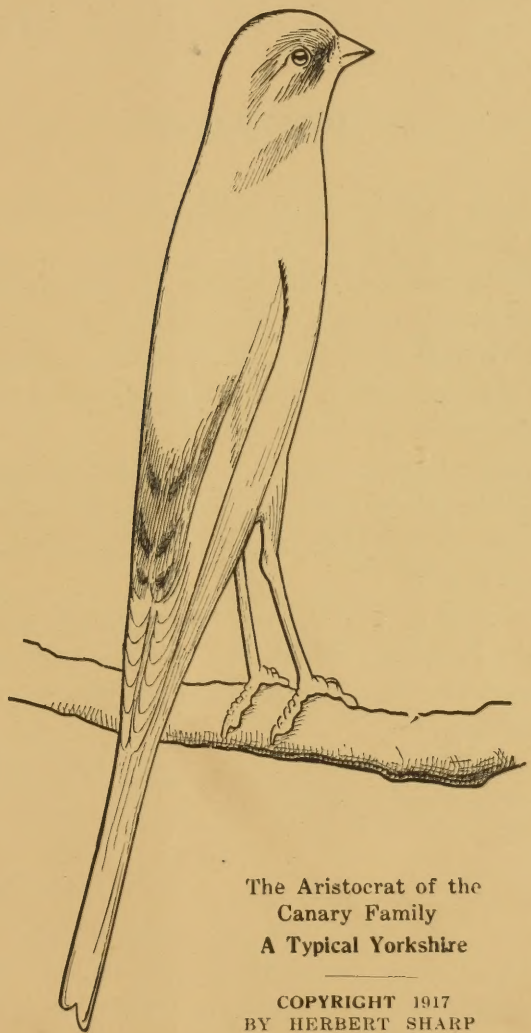
The Aristocrat of the
Canary Family
A Typical Yorkshire

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CANARIES

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PREFACE

The following pages have been written for those who wish to follow up the mating and breeding of canaries.

The writer has put theory and practise into plain language so that even a child can understand it and attain efficiency in breeding canaries.

While this book is somewhat small, it contains all the essential information one needs to be successful in mating birds to obtain a better class of birds than has been the custom to breed in time past.

Let the reader digest the matter in this book and he will have laid the foundation of bird knowledge which will bring him ultimate success. All the articles in this work are backed up by practical experience and tell you just as you will find it in practice.

Canary breeding is one of the most interesting and pleasant hobbies one can find ; boys and girls can indulge in it as there is nothing dissagreeable in its following, but much to be learnt from it which will help to increase knowledge and gain wisdom.

To bird lovers the writer offers this treatise and trusts they find in it the way to success and abundant pleasure.

H. S.

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MATING AND BREEDING CANARIES

No doubt there are many men who know a lot about breeding, but the writer having made a study and being successful of producing some very successful winners in the keenest competition, he feels there may be some advise and counsel he may offer the fancier.

GETTING THE BIRDS INTO BREEDING CONDITION

A good plan of preparing the birds for breeding is to start with males about the middle of January and give them a little Maw seed twice a week, and on alternate days a little Hemp seed, only a little must be given at first or your birds might suffer from eating too heartily.

These seeds are very rich and should be fed rather sparingly. Hemp seed is quite a fattening feed and if too much is given to the birds they will develop fat to such an extent that it will make them worthless for breeding purposes.

Greens should be given regularly both summer and winter but should be removed when wilted or showing signs of decay. Dandelions are quite a good feed, lettuce must be fed sparingly as it contains a drug. Oats or rape put in a box and sprinkled every day will produce greens of a choice quality.

Some use burlap or flannel tacked across a shallow box, letting burlap hang slack.

If the males show signs of coming into breeding condition too soon, we cut off the supply of Maw and Hemp seed to smaller portions.

A male in proper breeding condition will sing and flip his wings in a very lively manner, and if placed near a female he will dance around and sing as if his throat would split.

Females need a different treatment altogether. We aim to keep them somewhat more relaxed. We find Niger seed given twice a week to be one of the best conditioners to be found; being of an oily nature it prepares the hen's organs for her duty of laying eggs, also helps her to keep up heat for setting.

A little Hemp seed is good for the hens but must be given in small portions. Linseed is also valuable to breeding hens as it has the same elements as Niger seed. so if you cannot get one kind, then use the other.

A little egg food every other day will help those birds which are inclined to be backward. This is made by boiling an egg fifteen minutes and then ground up with a little biscuit or bread crumbs. We grind up the shell along with the egg as the lime in the shell is good for the birds.

We use a slice of loaf to one egg and give about a teaspoonful to a pair of birds. The egg food should be served in small dishes to keep it sweet and clean and not thrown in the cage bottom as it gets foul and unfit to eat.

CLEAN, PURE WATER ESSENTIAL

It is almost needless to say that clean water should be given as oft as possible. Birds in their natural state never have difficulty in obtaining this necessary part of their sustenance, yet many breeders will let their pets go thirsty by lack of thought to give them clean water. Birds will not drink impure water unless absolutely forced to do so, their bodies suffer as a result and you do not get the best out of birds which are deprived of nature's precious gift.

The water glasses should receive regular cleaning with warm water and soap so as to take off any slime which collects on the sides and bottom, a little time on this small but important task is well spent as the birds will thrive all the better by cleanliness.

KEEP THE MICE OUT

If you are troubled with mice you will have to look to the seed boxes as the mice not only eat the seed and thus starve the birds, but have the habit of wetting the seed. The birds either will not or cannot eat seed thus treated so you should empty the seed box, wash out and give a new supply.

Mice will even destroy the eggs and young nestlings, add to this their frightening effects on the mother hen and you will see at once the sooner they are destroyed, the better.

All mouse holes should be stopped up, a little tar smeared around the holes will in most cases drive them away, we fill the holes with broken glass and then stop up with tin or something of that kind.

Birds that are always kept with clean seed, pure water and in cages free from filth and vermin will require little extra feeding to get them into good breeding condition.

MATING THE BIRDS

In mating up your birds for breeding you must give heed to the quality and characteristics of each bird if you wish to get the best results.

For instance: If you have a male which is rather short, it would not be the part of wisdom to mate him with a short hen; to offset his deficiency, he must be mated with a longer hen than himself, and vice versa.

If you have a female with a hollow back, she must be mated to a male with a prominent rounded back. If one lacks style, color etc., the opposite sex should excell, this same rule applies all through, where one is deficient, the other should be strong in that particular point.

A little study on the mating will show quite an improvement in your young stock, this same method carried out year by year will give you rich rewards.

In mating up, yellow males are mated to buff females and buff males to yellow hens. We generally mate up one male with two hens, and run him on alternate days with each hen.

About three weeks before you intend mating up, it is a wise plan to put your hens into the cages you wish them to breed in as they get used to their new surroundings and settle down to business sooner when mated up.

Never change them around in breeding time, it never does any good in any way but always lots of harm, we know of hens leaving her nest and thus spoiling her eggs or letting the young birds die.

Here is a wrinkle worth the price of the whole book. If your birds lack color, you will find that by mating a yellow male with a yellow female the offspring will be deep colored but rather loose feathered.

You will get good results though the following season by mating these double yellows with buff mates.

If you wish to get short, soft and silky feather, mate buff with buff, it will be found that crossing these double buffs with the double yellows will give you birds with good color and quality of feather.

The old adage "Like Begets Like" is a good saying to keep in mind when mating up your birds. Remember that two birds lacking in any point will produce offspring which will in all probability show that weakness more than the parents, we are speaking now of mating two birds to each other, both

having the same fault ; If the male has a very flat head and the female a flat head, the young will have that bad feature emphasized and it will take you two or three season's breeding with correct mating to what is termed "breed it out".

The point to keep in mind when mating your birds is to offset any deficiency by mating to one extra strong on that particular point.

Suppose we have a hen which has a thin neck, short legs, loose, long feather, wings that fold over each other, a short body, and poor in color.

Now if the "Standard" calls for a nicely filled neck, medium long legs, short, silky feather, wings to just meet, a good long body and deep color, we would look over our males and select one that was spry, long legged, close, short feather, deep colored, full neck, and with wings inclined to droop a little.

This male would be an ideal bird to mate with the hen mentioned above. The young from these parents would be inclined to be a compromise of the parents qualities and faults.

In mentioning the "Standard" above, it might be well to say that all breeds and varieties have a "Standard". The standard is what has been decided as the "Ideal Bird" in that particular breed and variety.

Every breeder should obtain a standard of the breed he fancies, then study it carefully and try in a good sportsmanship-like manner to breed his birds as near as possible to it. The "Standard" is really what we might call the "Perfect" bird in that breed.

As a general rule, we have found by experience that the color and size is derived from the male, style and feather from the female; this is not always the case, but a general result. Some breeders differ on this theory but it has been found reasonably correct.

If one will take the matter of mating up in a serious manner, he can find much pleasure by noting results. Here is the results we found ; mating a cinnamon marked male to a green marked or clear female with green blood in her veins will give you both pink eye or cinnamon marked young, also dark eye or green young. All those young with pink eyes or cinnamon marked will be females and those with green or dark eyes will be males.

If you reverse the order and use a green blooded male with a cinnamon or pink eyed female, you will find all the young with cinnamon or pink eyes

to be males and the dark eyed young will be females.

If you wish to breed a large percentage of males, a little care and study will go a long way to get that result. Your male birds must be in the best possible condition, and run with one hen, so as to keep him in good, vigorous health, the young will then run most to males.

Another plan to follow is to note which hens breed the most males and follow this up by using her females to breed from as you then strengthen this trait and results will be sure to follow.

If you wish to breed more females. then run the male with two or even three females, keeping the hens in vigorous condition; you are likely to get a large number of clear eggs this way but the young that are hatched will run to females; choosing a hen which breeds females will also get the same result.

If the breeder desires, he can develop any trait or character in his birds by careful selection etc.

The clear birds are generally worth more money from an exhibition standpoint than the marked birds, so aim to breed as many clear or what we term "ticked" as possible. Of course there are many ticked birds worth as much money as clear birds, in some cases more, it all depends on the shape, color, style and other fine points, but for singers these points are ignored as the song is what is sought after.

HOW NEAR AKIN MAY WE BREED ?

Here is a much discussed and abused question. If we were asked to give an answer in a very few words, we would say "It depends on the vitality of the birds". To make it still clearer, we prefer to mate brother and sister, father and daughter, or mother and son, if vigorous, rather than mate one of a weak constitution and unrelated.

In some cases it is a benefit to mate relatives to fix a particular point, this method is resorted to by the most successful breeders and exhibitors.

We do not advocate breeding-in too much if it can be avoided, but on no account would we introduce a weakling simply to avoid mating relatives.

When the males and females have been together three or four days we give them a nest and some nesting material which can be made from old rope cut into short lengths about one-half inch long and unravelled, or take soft moss found near streams and ponds, dry it and give to the birds.

Some birds make neat and beautiful nests, others no nest at all, while some make a nest which has neither shape nor style.

To such birds we generally give a hand made nest; in some cases they will tear it out, as birds have notions of their own of what a nest should be like. Sometimes you will have to remake the nest several times before she accepts it.

THE CARE OF THE EGGS

While some breeders leave the eggs in the nest as the hen lays them, we prefer to take them out until the third egg is laid, then we replace them and let her set. We use cigar boxes to keep the eggs in and place them in rows with a card stating which hen the eggs are from. Bran is as good as anything to lay the eggs on.

Some breeders lay the eggs on their sides but we prefer to stand them on the small end. Our reason for this is; we find that the yolks settle to one side and cripples are the result when the eggs are laid on their sides.

While setting, hens like to be out of sight, so we hang a piece of cloth or paper in front of the nest and this keeps her somewhat secluded.

When the eggs hatch, we give the hen a food made from hard boiled egg and bread. Boil the egg fifteen minutes, put it into cold water to cool off, then grind up with it about two slices of loaf, give a little twice a day, increasing the amount as the young grow. Do not feed sour feed, it causes diarrhoea, this kills more young birds than anything else we know.

Hemp seed which has been crushed will help greatly, some breeders give the hemp whole but when you consider the hen feeding three to five hungry youngsters, you will see that crushing the hemp seed will assist her very much indeed, and will reward you with stronger young.

When the young birds are about three weeks old, the hen will be preparing to nest again. You will have to use judgement about this time as the male must be introduced at least three to seven days before she starts to lay again or her eggs will be clear and worthless.

When the male is allowed to run with the hen while rearing her young you need not worry about her having clear eggs as she will mate in time to avoid this.

In most cases the male will help to feed the young, so if he is not needed to run with another hen, you will help matters along to let him help with the feeding. However, you must watch him to see he does not pick them as some males are inclined to act like cannibals.

If the hen does not feed her young, which sometimes happens, the introduction of the male will probably start her. If he is a feeder, he will soon show it by carrying up some food to the young. If he does not actually feed the young, he will probably feed the hen and this may induce the hen to begin feeding.

A hen which does not feed her young is not much good to a fancier as she is a constant source of anxiety and worry. The only reason we ever kept such hens was their good qualities as show birds. In cases of birds like these, we give their eggs to other hens to hatch and rear, thus making the best of a bad situation.

Fortunately most hens feed their offspring, but the writer desires to present the bad as well as the good points so the beginner will be forewarned by being forewarned.

If we have a good bred hen which we know will give us choice stock, and have another hen nesting at the same time which does not give us good offspring but is a good feeder, we give her the eggs of the former bird and let the good bred hen lay another batch.

This method must be practised with care, as it is a drain on the hen's constitution and must only be done with rugged hens. It is not a wise policy to practise this method more than once each season.

CARE OF THE YOUNG BIRDS

When the young are about three weeks old, they can generally look after themselves in the matter of feeding. It is well to leave them with the parents a few days longer rather than taking them away too soon, as a well fed youngster has a better chance than one half fed.

Another good plan which we generally do is to put the young birds into a show cage or any cage with wires all round so the light is not cut off, and the parents will feed the young through the wires. Of course the show cage must be hung on the front of the parents cage which can be done by making a wire hook the shape of a letter S.

We hook on the show cage, then open either the breeding cage door or the show cage door so that only one set of wires separates the birds. There is a tendency for the show cage to stand away or sag, so when both doors are closed the distance is too great for the hen to reach the young.

Of course the young birds must have food with them all the time, not forgetting a supply of crushed hemp seed as this is a nourishing feed and the young birds thrive on it better than any other food with the exception of egg.

If the hen has laid another batch of eggs, the male will generally attend to the young birds; in fact, we remove the young birds when the hen begins to set again and put the male with them if we know he is a feeder. He will feed them a little and make them help themselves at the same time.

When at all possible, it is best to take the young birds away when the hen starts setting as they are apt to mess and break her eggs.

We recommend changing the water often as the young birds foul it by dropping food into it. The heat sours the food and water, which, if not changed will be apt to cause sickness.

A WORD ABOUT NESTS

Nests should always be dusted with some insect powder before the hen sets and again a day or two before the eggs hatch. Judgement and care must be exercised as some hens are fickle and will even forsake their nests.

However, if nests are not dusted they will soon become infested with red mites to such an extent that hens will leave their nests in disgust. The mites first appear like gray dust, this dust really being the eggs of the mites, they breed so fast and suck the blood from the birds so much as to weaken the birds that it behoves the breeders to keep the mites under control.

Mites have no lungs but breathe through the pores of the body; so you need a fine powder to stop up the pores, thus destroying them.

We always take the nest out of the nest box and put some insect powder in the bottom and under the moss or nesting material. This method always works well with us in keeping the mites down.

For the dust or eggs we take a little gasoline, and with a brush we go over all the crevices infested. Care must be exercised in using gasoline as it is explosive and must be kept away from lights.

Salt and water will do if one does not care to use gasoline, though it is not as clean and effective as the latter.

Keep your birds free from mites and dirt by giving them the bath on nice sunny days. A pair of birds free from mites will rear more and better youngsters than two pairs alive with vermin.

Nests should be placed a little higher than the perches as some hens will fly right out of the nest, consequently dragging eggs out at the same time and even the young birds have met the same fate by having nests below the perches. When the nests are placed higher than the perches, the hen must first stand up to look for the perch and by this manner she naturally separates her wings and feet from her eggs and young, thus avoiding dragging them out.

We prefer to place the nests between the perches, on back of cage or on the end of cage in centre. When nests are so placed you will see it is much easier for the hen to feed her young as she can get to both sides to feed from.

Nests should be as plain as possible, with a good rim so the parents can stand on it with ease. Many times the birds will mate on the nest edge so a good rim is essential.

There are only a few kinds of nests made that are really practical, the wire nests so often offered are far from being perfect. The English breeders use a special earthenware nest the shape of a cocoanut, this fits into a wire holder, making a neat, sanitary and convenient nest. A good substitute can be made by sawing a cocoanut into two parts and boring two holes for a wire support. Use stout wire such as wood pail bands, bend wire to form a right angle, then through the nut and clamp down firm, or the wire may come over top of nut and twisted around.

There are many ways to fix these wires which one may devise, the writer simply giving one method as a suggestion. It is a good plan to have the nests set away from the cage walls so as to prevent the refuse from the birds accumulating there.

Another serviceable nest can be made of wood, about half-inch stock and two inches wide, cut into four inches long and put together box shape, then fix on the bottom, we take store boxes and use the best wood from these. Stout wire forms the support with two nails to hold nest away from walls of cage. A small hook will be required to hang the nest on.

A second nest will be required when the first lot of young are about two to three weeks old as the hen will be preparing for her second laying.

A new supply of nesting material will be required or the hen will use the old nest which is dirty. Sometimes hens lay in the old nest and cannot be induced to lay in the new nest. Sometimes we change the nests around, putting the new nest where the old one was, and vice versa as some are very partial to a location; if this method fails, we let her finish laying her batch, taking her eggs away as laid until the third and then put all into new nest.

This way generally meets with success, though you must keep an eye on the old nest in case she lays another egg or two there.

Do not make the mistake of taking the nest out too often to look at the young birds, some hens are very fickle and will even forsake or destroy their young if tampered with; others will not seem to mind it at all, the writer has had hens that would stand on the edge of the nest and let him lift the whole lot out without the flutter of a wing. These hens are worth twice their weight in gold as they always prove to be the best of mothers.

It will be well to watch the birds at nesting time as you might find one that eats the eggs. The only way to do and be sure of saving the eggs is to make a false nest. We use the nest made by the hen and take a little of it out; then take a little cloth and make a hole in it large enough for the egg to pass through. A hem and draw-string will hold it in place or you can use a little glue around the edge of nest, pressing the cloth to it and allow it time to set before giving to the birds.

We let the cloth sag a little so the egg will roll into nest as soon as it is laid. Care must be used to have soft nesting material for egg to drop on.

The eggs will have to be given to another hen to hatch or divided among others. Sometimes you will have hens lay five, six or even seven eggs, while others lay but two or perhaps three.

When this happens at the same time, we invariably take one or two of the large batch and give to the other hen, before doing this, we mark them so we know which eggs are from each hen. When the same have been set seven or eight days, we test them by holding them up to a good light and if any are found to be clear we take them out, and, when possible, we transfer back the eggs to their proper parents. This avoids getting the young mixed.

In case you have to let them hatch with the foster mother, there are many times when you can tell the young with certainty. Suppose you are using cinnamon blood in one mating and green blood in the other; it is easy to tell which the young are from, because all the cinnamon marked or pink eyed young are from the cinnamon mating.

If, however, you have cinnamon blood in each mating, your chances are rather small to tell which mating they belong, as even cinnamon marked birds sometimes have green blood in their veins which will be apt to throw out both green and cinnamon marked.

The writer has tried all sorts of stunts to get the young reared by transferring, in some cases we have even put eggs under a hen which has only been setting four or five days and then transferring again to another hen whose eggs have proved clear or failed to hatch.

It is possible to gain quite a number of birds in a season in this way, I am referring now to the moderate or large breeder.

Another stunt we have often done is to take a nest of eggs from a good pair and give them to a common hen, throwing away the eggs of the inferior bird and allowing the better pair to nest again. By this method you gain an extra nest from your good birds.

SOME QUEER HENS

Sometimes you will find a hen feed her young until they are two weeks old and then suddenly stop for no apparent reason; in a case like this we look for mites in the nest as this is generally the case. If the nest is infested very bad, it is best to give them a new nest and lift the young into it.

If the hen is run down in health she will cease to feed, you can remedy this by putting the male bird in to help with the feeding. We once had a male that was no good as a breeder or singer, but we valued him worth more than any bird we owned simply because he was a good feeder. We could put nest after nest of youngsters with him and he invariably fed them all. Such birds are scarce and worth keeping when you find one of this character.

Another little trick which was successful was to take any young bird that did not thrive as fast as its mates and put it in with a lot of its own size, you will find many cases where a late hatched youngster never overtakes its mates simply because it was hatched a day later than the rest.

THINGS IN GENERAL

Above all things, keep the breeders supplied with clean, pure water, at this time they need lots of it and there is nothing gained by neglecting to provide it. Remember she has young to feed and care for and clean water is a necessity.

Green food in some form or other must be supplied as young birds cannot be reared successfully without it. Dandelions are a good feed, so is cress, if these cannot be obtained readily you can grow your own green food by making a shallow box, bore a few holes in the bottom, then lay a piece of burlap or flannel in the bottom, spread a few oats or rape seed on the burlap and water them with lukewarm water every day. You will soon have a supply of choice greens at a small expense, the box should be placed where it is warm as heat will hasten growth.

Dont let the seed get dry or it will not sprout. Another way is to put a little sand in the box, then lay burlap on sand and sow the seed on burlap; sand will help to keep the seed moist and also give a little nourishment to the plant.

For winter use, these greens are quite a dainty for the birds. You can expect greens from seed thus sown in about five or six days if kept reasonably warm and moist.

Gravel is essential to the well being of birds at all times especially in the breeding season as it serves as teeth to grind up the food in the gizzard.

Lime in some form or other should be supplied as the birds need it for shelling their eggs. We look around for pieces of old plaster in old buildings as this contains what lime is needed and also serves the purpose of giving the birds something to trim their beaks on. Birds with overgrown beaks cannot feed their young as they ought so keep them supplied with something to trim their beaks on.

Cuttlefish bone will be useful if you cannot obtain plaster, egg shells ground up will help considerably if dried, you can crush them with a piece of wood or even your hands. If shell forming substance is not supplied, the hen will have to rob her own bones to get material to make the shell, this in time will wear her down and eventually die, so do not be penny wise and pound foolish thinking you save by withholding the things she needs.

When you have selected the mates for your hens, you will have to keep a look-out to see there is not too much fighting, generally all will go along as it ought but sometimes a male will attack a female and almost peck her to pieces unless taken out. In a case like this, we put him into a show cage and hang it on the front of the hen's cage until they become "better acquainted."

If, on returning him, he should begin to fight again, we would try him with another hen; cases like this are rare but once in a while will occur.

If a certain pair produces nothing but clear eggs, changing their mates will often prove effective.

Keep down the mice and mites; your battles are then half won, clean food and cages constitute the other half.

If the hen sweats her young and you are running the male with her, it will help matters to take him away as by doing this, the hen will be obliged to come of the nest often to get food and this gives the young an airing.

Still another way is to take out some of the nesting material and then flatten out the nest so air can get to the young.

Dont pamper your birds, keep them supplied with good, clean canary seed, Spanish canary is best, though the Turkey and American varieties when clean are good.

Eggs generally hatch in thirteen or fourteen days, much depends if the weather is warm or cold, also if the hen is a keen sitter or not.

Dont make "soggy" egg food. If you dont have dry bread, use a few dry crackers; soggy food sours; crackers being dry, keep sweet longer.

The crackers and egg are easily ground up with an ordinary grater.

If the eggs do not hatch on the fourteenth day, soak them a little in luke-warm water and replace in nest. Handle them carefully.

Males are distinguished by having a bold eye, slightly flat head and a general masculine appearance. To hear them sing freely is a sure sign.

Keep the claws of your old birds trimmed as the nails grow long which prevents the free movement of the bird. Also see the beak is kept in good order so feeding is not interfered with.

Last but not the least important, boost your breed and variety, try to breed better birds every season, attend and help your club to promote the breeding and exhibition of canaries, thus helping to bring success to all.

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