

These consequently hang too close to the bird's face, practically blinding one eye. White in face, at one time the greatest fault in Minorcas, has been, to a great extent, bred out in England, though a great many birds still appear at Scottish shows with this fatal defect.-- B. S. WYNNE, in *Poultry*, England.

THE POULTRY INDUSTRY.

BY J. R. HOWARD.

ONE of the few districts in England where poultry receives some measure of the attention they merit is in East Sussex, the centre of the trade being at Heathfield and extending to Battle, Pevensey, Hailsham, and various other towns and villages. It is quite enlivening to see the quantity of poultry kept in this neighborhood, and the healthy appearance of the birds compared to the few weedy fowls to be noticed straggling about the farms and cottages in most parts of England. The chickens are hatched in large quantities by the small farmers and cottagers, and wherever an inhabited abode is to be seen the hedges and lanes are swarming with broods of chicks in all stages of growth.

The hatching is almost entirely done by the hens, artificial incubation not having yet been indulged in to any extent. There is always a ready sale for the chickens, as they are purchased by higgler, who are employed by the fatters to go about the country collecting the young birds, and who pay so much apiece for them, then and there, the prices being very dependent on the season. After the recent severe weather, those who have been lucky enough to save their youngsters will be expecting as much as 4s. and 4s.6d. each, for those hatched early in January; after April the prices gradually fall about threepence a week, till in June and July the maximum of 1s. 9d. is reached.

The higgler go round in carts, with large baskets, and scour the country for miles. Only when pressed for numbers, and having large orders from the fatters, will they take the smallest chickens, selecting the heaviest and lumpiest young ones only, which, from constant practice, they can tell at a glance.

The fowls chiefly to be met with are a cross between the Dorking and the light Brahma, and white-legged birds are preferred to others. The Indian Game cross, which has been so successful recently in taking the prizes for table poultry at Birmingham and the Agricultural Hall, is not as

yet looked upon with any special favor in this district, and the Langshan-bred chickens are still objected to by some of the higgler, though with most private breeders they are most esteemed for their size and for their quantity of tender white flesh.

After the purchase of the chickens by the higgler they are conveyed to the fatters, and the process is commenced of getting them ready for the market. The number of young birds prepared by the largest fatters is almost incredible. One farmer, known as "The King of the Fatters," sends up as many as one hundred dozen a week to London during the season, and he has frequently to import chickens from Ireland and elsewhere, the supply in the home district being insufficient. The method generally adopted for fattening is as follows:

The chickens are placed in coops in long, narrow sheds; rows of coops, with open-railed front and bottom ranging down each side of the shed, with about five chickens in each coop. The pens are raised about three feet from the ground, dry ashes or earth being scattered underneath, and cleanliness quickly and easily attained by a boy with a hoe daily removing the droppings. Under these conditions there is no unpleasant smell, even in the warmest weather, though there are often from twelve to fifteen hundred fowls in each shed at a time. The length of time required for fattening varies according to the period of the year. In May, for instance, they fatten quickly, and are ready in about twelve or fourteen days; but in the autumn they take from fourteen days to three weeks before they are fit for killing. For the first week they are fed on skim milk and ground oats, mixed into a semi-fluid state; then, for some days on the same diet, with some suet added; up to this time they are fed from a trough. But for the last few days of their existence the same food is forced into them by means of a machine, cylindrical in shape, to which an elastic tube, with a nozzle is attached. The chicken is held by one boy, who inserts the nozzle into its throat, whilst another boy turns a handle, which forces the food from the body of the machine into the crop of the bird. When the boy who holds the fowl feels the crop sufficiently distended, the nozzle is removed, and the bird returned to his coop, where he quietly digests his dinner till the next meal is ready.

As is probably known, a bird, when fattening, will lie down a great deal, and the comb of the cockerels will enlarge rapidly. It is usually the practice to make a chicken fast for some hours on the arrival at the fatters, for, if offered food at once, it will often refuse to eat, and make, and so make a bad beginning; while, after waiting a while, a vigorous appetite is created, and the bird learns to expect its