

believe more Redcap chickens die from the neglect of this precaution than from all other diseases put together. April is, I find, the best month for hatching, and I may say that for several years all the best birds I have bred have been hatched in the first or second week of that month. They succeed well if hatched in February and March, if you are fortunate enough to be able to get them so early, but there is little advantage to be gained, for those hatched in April and May will lay almost as soon as the early ones. They are fairly good winter layers, being, in this respect, quite as good as Minorcas, Leghorns, and other of the non-sitting breeds. I find that hens two and three years old will generally lay much better than pullets in winter, and hens four and five years old frequently prove splendid layers, laying quite as well as pullets. Redcaps will average near upon 200 eggs annually, and this without any particular care being taken to select the best layers. The eggs are very rich, of beautiful flavour for the breakfast table, in colour white, or slightly tinted, and should average eight to the pound. I am quite of the opinion that as a general rule the largest combed birds are the best layers, which rule holds good in many other varieties.

The Redcap is generally supposed to have originated in Yorkshire, and many writers are of the opinion that it was the produce of a cross between the old English Game and the golden spangled Hamburg, but nothing is known for certain. My own opinion is, that however the Redcap may have been manufactured at the outset, it is in reality the original of the golden spangled Hamburg which has been evolved from it just in the same manner as the many varieties of Bantams have been bred from the larger breeds. Many different names have been given to it at various times and in different parts of the country. Thus, in Yorkshire and

Lancashire they have been called Pheasant fowls, Moss Pheasants, and Manchesters; in Staffordshire, Copper fowls; and in Nottinghamshire, Crammers. We have also the names Yorkshire and Derbyshire Redcaps. But wherever they have been kept they have always been great favourites. In both sexes the large comb is the leading characteristic. It should be as large as can be comfortably carried, full of fine work or spikes, with straight leader behind, and carried straight on the head. Much improvement has been effected in this point of late years, and ugly combs are now rarely seen. The ear-lobes are red, and the legs slate colour. The cock has black breast and tail, back rich red, spangled with black half moon spangles. The ground colour of the hen is rich reddish brown, each feather being tipped with a large half moon spangle. Weight of cocks about 7lb., hens about 6lb.

Great caution should be exercised in purchasing birds for breeding, as the country is full of a small kind of cross-bred Redcap, often described in advertisements as prize winners and prize bred birds. Many of these have no Redcap blood in them at all, being simply cross bred. They are very small boned, hens generally light-coloured, with very narrow laces and small Hamburg combs. I have little doubt that these birds form the greatest obstacle to the progress of the true Redcap, and it would be a good thing if they could be swept clean out of the country. For crossing purposes the Redcap is especially valuable. The best crosses are the Redcap cock with Brahma, Cochins, Plymouth Rock, or Wyandotte hens. The birds thus produced make splendid layers and table birds. For producing the best layers possible mate the Redcap cock with Minorca or Leghorn hens.

Redcaps are far more popular in the United States than in England. Our

American cousins quickly recognized merit, and openly acknowledge them to beat "creation" at laying. One large poultry farm, to whom I exported thirty-five breeding birds in the early part of 1889, bred 600 Redcaps last year, and so delighted are they with them that they have cleared out all their stock of Leghorns and Minorcas to make room for them.

A Redcap Club has just been started by some English fanciers. A standard of excellence has been drawn up and published. The subscription for members is only 5s. per year, and I would earnestly urge all lovers of the Redcap to give us their support, and thus enable it to emerge from the oblivion in which it has so long been hidden.

ALBERT E. WRAGG.

—In Feathered World.

## WHITE POULTRY.

HOW TO KEEP AND PREPARE THEM FOR EXHIBITION.

*Stock-Keeper.*

A SCORE of years ago white poultry were comparatively scarce: With the exception of Cochins, a few Dorkings, and a stray pen or two of Sultans, Silkies, or Bantams, but few white fowls were exhibited. Many thought all white varieties must, naturally, because of their colour, be delicate, and so would not keep them, while others were deterred from doing so by the great difficulty that was experienced in keeping the birds clean, and preparing them for the show pens. The former idea has now been cast to the winds, and the latter has been considerably lessened by practical hints and suggestions which an extended poultry press has been