

The Household.

Rabbits.

THESE little animals are chiefly valued as domestic pets; and as a source of innocent amusement to the boys of a family, and a means of teaching responsibility, thrift, attention, and management, they are well worthy of being kept in every household. They are not, however, destitute of value in a utilitarian point of view. Their fur enters largely into hat and other manufactures; their flesh is a light and palatable food; and their dung is an excellent manure for clayey soils, and is particularly serviceable in the culture of many fibrous-rooted greenhouse plants. The rabbit being a general feeder, is, like the fowl and pig, a kind of save-all; consuming what would otherwise go to waste. Garden refuse and kitchen scraps, will with the addition of a moderate supply of other food suffice to keep a little stud of rabbits. The objection sometimes made to them on account of the unpleasant smell emitted from the hutch, can be obviated by maintaining a proper degree of cleanliness. A like objection arises out of neglect in the case of all the animals domesticated and kept by man, whether for use of pleasure.

The rabbit belongs to the class Mammalia, or suck-giving animals; and to the order which is called *Incisores*, because they cut their food with the front teeth of their upper and lower jaws. They do not grind their food like the horse or ox, because they have no grinders, or molar teeth. The male rabbit is called "a buck" and the female "a doe." Rabbits are polygamous; one male being sufficient for thirty or more females. In warrens, only one male is allowed to a hundred. The bucks are troublesome from their wild, mischievous, and quarrelsome disposition, and in order to success in rabbit-keeping, they must be closely watched, or they will do injury. Does may be allowed to breed at six months old. Their period of gestation is thirty or thirty-one days. A fortnight after littering, they are ready to breed again, and may be suffered to do so. They multiply in winter as well as summer, and will therefore increase very fast. At a moderate calculation, six litters in the year may be counted on. The male and female should be kept in separate hutches, and put together for a night at the breeding periods. The buck will harass the doe if allowed free access to her, and will also often kill the young ones. The number produced at a birth, varies from two to a dozen. Six or eight are quite sufficient for the strength of the mother. An account should be kept of the time the doe is expected to bring forth, and a few days beforehand a large handful of coarse but sweet hay should be thrown into the hutch. With this she will form her nest, and

will line it with fur stripped off her own belly. The previous litter must always be removed before the doe has a second; the hutch must be kept scrupulously clean; and care taken not to touch or handle the newly-born rabbits, as unnecessary disturbance is apt to make the mother destroy her progeny. The little rabbits come into the world blind and helpless, covered only with a fine down. On the fifth day they get their sight, and soon after begin to be active. At a month old they eat alone, and at six weeks they ought to be weaned. After weaning, their management will depend on their destiny. If meant for the table, they must be fed well so as to fatten quickly.

with the right hand, and support the rump with the left. Does with young should be handled with especial gentleness. The mode of keeping rabbits must depend somewhat on the number to be taken care of. Warrens, courts, and pits are only adapted for large numbers. For ordinary rabbit-keeping, the hutch is most convenient. Our space does not admit of going into lengthy details; suffice it to say that comfort, convenience, ventilation, and warmth must be kept in view, and especially facilities for keeping clean. A simple box may be made to answer, or an elaborate hutch may be constructed. In reference to feeding, only a hint or two can be given. They

should have a meal twice a day,—at morning and night. If green food is given, it should be thoroughly dried first. Refuse of such garden vegetables as are not too watery will be suitable, but *wet herbage must be withheld*, as it is most injurious to them. The leaves and roots of carrots, all sorts of leguminous plants, the leaves and branches of trees,—in short almost any green thing may be given them. A proportion of dry food is also necessary. Oats once a day is excellent diet for them. Wheat bran, and grain of all kinds, are relished. For winter feeding, hay, potatoes, turnips, beets, the haulm of peas and beans, bran or grain, are suitable. A little salt occasionally is requisite. Variety of food, and plenty of it, are what is needed. Attention must be paid them, and regularity in feeding must be observed, if success be desired. There are several breeds of rabbits, but we cannot now particularize them. Suffice it to say, that the lop-eared variety, like that shown in the small engraving, is chiefly delighted in by fanciers. The object aimed at is to breed them with as long and even sized ears as possible, and showing a perfect lop. Ears of enormous length have been obtained; in some instances from twenty to twenty-two inches. A great deal of interest is often excited at shows, and rabbit-keepers vie with each other for the production of the best specimens, just as breeders of Shorthorns, and Leicesters do with animals of a larger growth and higher value.



About three months old, the males must be castrated to prevent mischief. Some allow all the weanlings to herd in one apartment, and others take care to keep together all the rabbits of the same month. From the fifth to the sixth month those meant for the table should be ready to be so disposed of. Of course

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the handsomest and best tempered must be kept for the breeding stock. Does will continue prolific until they are five years old, and the whole term of the rabbit's natural life is only from six to nine years.

Rabbits require tender and careful handling. The proper way to take hold of them is to grasp the ears

only to wash with salt and water, filling the cracks where they frequent with salt, and you may look in vain for them. Salt seems inimical to bedbugs, and they will not trail through it. I think it preferable to all 'ointments,' and the buyer requires no certificate of its genuineness."

SALT FOR BEDBUGS.—A correspondent of the *Olean Advertiser* thus presents to the editor a remedy for that kind of vermin so often found in the beds taken by travellers on steam boats and at hotels as well as in private houses. He says:—"If any of your readers need a sure remedy for bedbugs, they can have mine, and cleanse the house of this troublesome vermin without expense. They have