

brought back in his strength, and heaven and earth clap their hands for joy.

The mistletoe was the arrow that killed Balder, for the mistletoe is alive when all other plants are dead with their winter sleep; but the mistletoe being taken from the hands of the God of Mischief, and placed under the care of the Goddess of Love, is hung on high, to remind us not to look down, or back, or on the earth, if we would live in love and friendship—for Love has dominion there—but forward and upward, where the gods reside, and where a hopeful future is placed before us in the commencement of a new year.

A DISH OF POULTRY.

AS I had a wish to be fashionable, I decided to set up a poultry-yard.

There is one disadvantage in being married: if single, you can say you will do a thing, and do it; if married, you may assert what you please, but you will find that you cannot do it, without reservation.

In this particular instance of keeping poultry, my husband, who is a practical man, made a reservation. "I have no objection, provided you make it pay, and promise me a fresh egg every morning of the year." I set to work to find out how to make it pay, and I came to the conclusion that, to do so, I must be poultry-woman myself.

It was a little irksome at first to get up at six o'clock in the morning; but I comforted myself by remembering, that in the pursuit of fashion people did a very more disagreeable thing than that. Indeed, I soon began to like it; and if I choose to try and describe the beauty of a dowy morning, I am pretty sure I should not know where to end, for every morning there was something fresh to admire.

Making my poultry pay, involved another regulation. I could not pretend to make my name famous by some wonderful breed of new fowls, and provide my husband with a fresh egg every morning of his life. I must have breeds of all sorts and kinds to do that. So I found myself, at the end of a year, surrounded by plenty of poultry, of every sort, size, and description. Moreover, they interested me extremely. I used to take a chair, sit down among them, and study their characters.

Setting aside their little peculiarities as birds, how wonderfully they reminded me of the society in which we lived! Each hen had her little peculiarities, just as each of my female friends had their whimsies. The feathered cocks were not more absurd than many a gentleman of my acquaintance; and so many likenesses did I find in my cackling and crowing company to my visiting and bowing acquaintances, that I christened my cocks and hens after their human prototypes. I could write pages on the dispositions and idiosyncrasies of fowls; but I intend to confine myself to two.

Among my various sorts and kinds, I had one little golden-faced Hamburg hen, of so elegant a form, so beautifully complexioned, and of such sweet, engaging manners, that I called her Lady Mary, after a certain lovely and beloved young friend.

Lady Mary made herself the favourite, whether I would or not. She was always the first to see men coming; she did not fuss herself, or gobble eagerly after food, but flew on to a rail; as I passed that rail, she flew into my hand. From it she daintily helped herself out of the tin of food. During the whole process of feeding, she remained on my hand or shoulder, looking down on the greedy crowd below with lofty disdain.

Had she any grievance to communicate to me, she flew upon my hat, and made onslaughts on it. I thus understood the water was not fit for her to drink, or that some one had been daring to use her nest, or that she had serious thoughts of laying an egg. She was immensely fussy about her nest, going in and out of it, peering at me, as if I was perfectly aware of all her wants. In her nest I had put a little galleno egg, by way of a nest-egg, thinking the size of it would be about the size of her own egg. Not

a bit of it. In her various trials of all the nests about, she had come upon one with an added turkey-egg in it, by way of nest-egg. I understood as well as possible, that though Lady Mary's nest was made of chopped straw, unlike all the others, and though I had put a grating so that few but herself could get into it, she never would be satisfied, or lay an egg comfortably, until she had the saddled turkey-egg substituted for the galleno's egg. Readers, have you not often met a friend similarly whimsical, with everything in the world but one little trifle, the possession of a neighbour? Lady Mary was immensely delighted when she had the turkey's egg given her. In her language, she chuckled over it for hours, and diligently laid a little tiny egg by it, almost every other day.

My other "historical" fowl was also a lion. A heavy short-legged stupid-looking creature, with a little Polish blood in her veins; for she had a shabby-looking topknot of feathers on her head, that never would arrange itself straight. Like an old dowager, who thinks the family diamonds will make amends for the dyed satin gown, this old hen fancied her topknot was a patent of nobility, and she strutted about as if queen of the yard. She reminded me very much of an old great-aunt of mine, whose head-gear was the one worry of her own life, and the life of those near her. She thought of what she should put on her head the moment she got up in the morning; and the wonder, if it had kept straight all day (which it never did), occupied her the last thing at night. I had a mind to call my old hen, Aunt Deb, but the likeness was too striking, so I christened her Juno. She was a stupid creature, and plumped her first egg down in the yard; but I must do her the justice to say, that when once shown a nest, she pertinaciously kept to it ever after, no matter what state it might be in. Between Lady Mary and Juno there was no love lost; the former always "shied" her, as it were, just as if some old fat farmer's wife was being too familiar with a young princess. Not that there was much feeling of any kind in poor old Juno's breast. She appeared to me, solely occupied in the thought of her topknot. She seemed always trying to gaze up at this wonderful structure, so that she was always the last to get any food, to be on her perch, to do anything.

She laid eggs with praiseworthy industry, and she sat upon them like a model mother. In fact, it appeared to me that she was always sitting.

Though I was the poultry-woman, I was allowed a person not only to clean out the fowl-houses every other day, but also to take care of them during any absence of mine, Judith Morgan was the name of my coadjutor.

"Judith," said I, "I am going from home for three weeks. Now, mind you take care of the fowls."

"Deed and I will, mem."

"Save all the eggs, and put them in bran. Any hens wanting to sit, set them, and make a note of the day. Don't forget to set duck eggs as well."

"Deed and I won't, mem."

"And mind you call cheerily out to them, and speak to them all, especially Lady Mary."

"Deed and I will, mem."

When I returned home after three weeks' absence (I usually indulged myself by not getting up the first morning or so), I went down after breakfast to inspect my poultry, and hear of their welfare. I was not surprised that no Lady Mary met me. Three weeks of disappointment in a henish mind would naturally tend to forgetfulness.

"Well, Judith, how many eggs?"

"Three undered and eighty-two, mem."

"Any hens sitting?"

"Deed, mem, there's old Juno at it agin, and deed o' goodness, mem, if Lady Mary beant a sitting too."

"Is she indeed? That is the first time I ever knew her do so."

"True for you, mem. It were all along a missing you. She took to sitting immediate."

"Then her time is nearly up?"

"Deed, mem, as she were that fond o' big eggs, I did give her duck-eggs."

"Then you were very silly. And I suppose Juno has hen-eggs?"

"Deed her'she, mem?"

"Well, couldn't you see that a little thing like Lady Mary could only cover a few eggs, and ought to have had small ones; while old Juno can keep warm almost as many as a turkey, and could have taken fifteen duck-eggs? Besides, Lady Mary never sat before, and a month of it will sicken her."

"Deed, mem, it's amazin', I didn't see that."

I spoke to Lady Mary, who condescended to come out and inform me, after her fashion, that she thought it high time she should bring up a family. But evidently she was heartily sick of sitting, and I was obliged to keep the grating over her nest until the eggs chipped.

Madame Juno was sitting awkwardly on her eggs, gazing up at her topknot, evidently equally indifferent to my attentions or Judith's; either was the same to her.

In due time, both hatched out, and were put out in the orchard under two coops not far from each other, with wired grass runs for the young ones. Lady Mary was intensely delighted with her downy little lumps of fluff at first. But when nature asserted her rights, and they began to paddle about, into the water and out, over the food and in it, sprinkling it about, and eating it in an extraordinary fashion, I shall never forget her dismay.

Had not the mother instinct been irrepressible, I doubt if she would have permitted the little damp dirty things to go and dry themselves warm under her. As it was, all her mother pride was gone. She would not eat, she would not cluck, she seemed almost broken-hearted; and, as if to put the climax to her woes, she had a full view of Madam Juno clucking sonorously to cloven of the prettiest, brightest, sweetest little dainty chickens ever seen—which, by-the-by, in her perpetual gazing up at her beloved topknot, she was always treading upon.

"Oh, Judith," said I, "how sorry I am that Lady Mary has not those pretty chickens, and Juno the ducks! Ducks can always take care of themselves, and old Juno is so stupid, she will tread those chickens to death."

"Deed, mem, 'tis a pity. Lady Mary don't seem to stomach the ducklings at all."

"She will never sit again, you will see," said I. I coaxed her, and petted her, and did all I could to soothe her feelings, even going so far as to let her out the next day for a little run. She did not go far, but kept close to Juno's coop. Juno was let out in a day or two after, for my sake by myself, so that I witnessed what followed. The moment old Juno stalked forth, blundering over her brood as she did it, Lady Mary flew upon her. She buffeted her, and, as if aware of her weakness, pecked at her topknot; she hustled her, drove her, and at last sent her flying, half blind, and wholly stupid, into her (Lady Mary's) coop, whither the little ducks had fled, in dire terror at their foster-mother's behaviour. She watched for a few moments. I gently closed the coop, making Juno and the ducks prisoners. When, on hearing the little plaintive chirp of the startled chickens, Lady Mary gave a loud and joyous chirrup, to which they quickly responded, and collecting them all round her, clucking and chirruping until she lost her balance, little Lady Mary carried the whole brood to the other end of the orchard. Then it was impossible to say which was the happier, the proud little mother, or the eager busy chirping little chicks.

As for Madam Juno, she remained stunned and mystified for some time. At last, feeling little timid soft things creeping under her, she obeyed her instincts, and squatted over them. Then she and her newly-acquired children all had a good doze; and to this minute it is mine and it is Judith's belief that she does not know her children were ever changed.

Footo, the actor, had occasion one day to cross over London Bridge in a cab, and as usual there was a "block up." Footo being in a hurry, anxiously inquired of a passer-by the cause, and the only answer he got was "That it was only a man who swallowed a ton of coal." To which the ever-ready wit replied, "Dear me! and what did he take to wash it down?"