

The Poultry Yard.

Silky Fowls.

This peculiar breed of fowls is said to be a native of India, but we have it on good authority that the only specimens to be seen there came from China, Malacca or Singapore. The arrangement of the feathers differs in several respects from that of the ordinary fowl. Both the stem of the feather and the fibres which proceed from it are thin, weak and non-elastic. They do not assume a position opposite each other, but hang about in a lax and undetermined manner. The fibrils are also very weak and thin, besides being very sparse, and extend from the main feather at nearly right angles, and consequently are destitute of that interlocking power so perceptible in an ordinary feather when smoothed down with the hand. "Silkies," says Mr. Wragg in the Poultry Book, "may be classed as purely fancy poultry, having little but their unique appearance to recommend them. Instead of feathers they are covered with an abundance of white silky hair; the wing and tail quills also being hung with long silky fringe. The skin and legs are blue, the face and comb a deep purple color, ear-lobes being slightly tinged with white. The best specimens have five toes and are feathered on the legs. The plumage should be pure white. The cock should have a full prominent breast; neck medium sized; hackle very full, flowing well round the shoulders and on the back; saddle square, and rising upwards to the tail, which should gradually rise a few inches and then droop over. The comb is double, but is wider than long, having a lumpy appearance, with scarcely any points on the top. It should be well on the front of the head and behind it should be a spur or crest of feathers projecting straight out, about two inches in length. The weight of the cock averages about four pounds. The hen is rather small in proportion, weighing only about two and a half pounds. She is very square and compactly built, breast being full and round, neck rather short, saddle square and well cushioned, tail almost buried in fluff, which is very abundant, and a fine small head. From the top of the head should rise a small globular crest. The general style and shape are very attractive."

Silkies do well in an enclosed run, always appearing cheerful and contented, they keep themselves much cleaner than the generality of light colored birds, are excellent sitters and mothers, take great care of their chickens and run a long time with them. They generally lay about thirteen or fourteen eggs before desiring to sit, very rarely more, and frequently only ten or eleven. An excellent cross for sitting purposes is obtained by crossing a Silky cock with a White Game hen, the pullets from this cross are found to be exemplary sitters, excellent mothers, beginning to lay early and after laying ten or twelve eggs sitting, a very valuable thing for those who are desirous of procuring early chickens. Pullets of this breed begin to lay about seven months old; the eggs are of a pretty cream color, but of course rather small. The chickens are easily reared; once hatched, they require but little care. During the last week of incubation the eggs should be kept well moistened, as the inner membrane of the shell of the egg entirely peels off in some cases. Silkies in no way should have intercourse with other breeds, as the color of the skin is very difficult to breed out when once got and consequently spoils birds for the table.

The peculiar formation of plumage of this breed is occasionally to be met with in Cochins, which are then also called Silky, and sometimes Emu fowls. A cross between this variety of Cochins and the Silky might establish a new variety, but inferior to the true Silky.

THOS. MACLEAN.

Timely Hints on Management.

The months of December and January are a trying season for poultry, and at this time of the year the breeder will find it advantageous to exert special care for his favorite birds, who at this cheerless frigid period need his humane attentions particularly, for their comparative comfort and health.

The fowls have now come to maturity, for the most part. They are, generally speaking, in full plumage. And if of the previous season's hatchings, the pullets are now ready, or have already begun, to lay; older hens, well through

with the annual moult, are also returning to this duty; and to keep them at this work they require good feed, plenty of it, regularly, and of the right kind to assist in the egg-producing process.

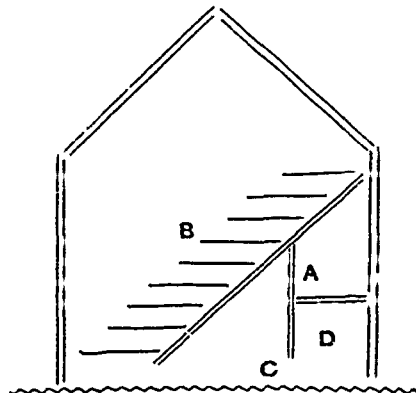
From this time, through February, they cannot come to the earth outside of the hen-house limits, to any extent. The ground is frozen, or covered with ice and snow. The chickens do not like this prospect, and they do not care to quit their warmer sheltered quarters, if the houses be originally tight and comfortable. We must therefore look to it that their quarters are kept cleanly, sufficiently ventilated in the middle of the day, and well closed at night and in the boisterous, windy, stormy days.

Another caution must constantly be observed towards keeping the birds in good condition and thrift, at this usually inclement period; and that is that they be not over-crowded in numbers. More fowls can safely be kept together during these months than at other times, but we should never so limit them in their houses that they will be obliged to huddle together too closely, either by day or by night.

Keep the fowls clean. Supply them with green food, a warm meal at least once a day, ground bone, gravel, crushed oyster-shells, the dust-bath (with powdered sulphur scattered amongst it), fresh tepid water daily and occasionally cooked coarse meat or scraps. Follow this course up diligently, and they will thrive, give you more or less eggs even in these months, and thus reward you for your kindness and attention.—*Poultry World*.

A Sitting Room.

Mr. J. R. Sturtevant sends to the *Poultry World* the following description of a room for sitting fowls, such as he has made use of for a number of years. He says:—In the first place I have a house for my Light Brahmas (those being my sitting fowls), 75 feet long and 16 feet wide, with glass in roof and on the sides. Four feet from the inside side of the building, and running its whole length, I have a planed board partition running at an angle of 45 degrees to the floor, and being one foot from the floor. On the top of this my roosts are placed, six inches from the aforesaid



A, is the lath partition under the roosts. B, the roosts. C, nest boxes. D, space for the hen sitting to run in when the box is turned round.

slanting plane. In this way I can easily preserve all my hen manure. Underneath this partition or slanting plane on which my roosts are placed, three feet from where it starts from the floor, I have a row of nest boxes, one foot square, moveable. These nest boxes are all placed so as to slide in and out from under a board running the length of the building. From this board there is a partition of lath running at right angles to this board until it strikes the roosts above, leaving a space from said lath partition to the rear wall of my building, about ten feet. Now my hens run under the roost to their nest-boxes to lay, it being dark, they like it. When a hen wishes to sit, I turn the nest-box round with the hen in it, and allow her to sit, giving her a compartment the width of the nest-box made of lath in this space of ten feet before spoken of. Here she may have feed and water, and dust bath, ashes. No laying hen can disturb one that is sitting.

FEEDING FROM HOPPERS.—A correspondent of the *Rural New Yorker* says he has kept from 80 to 300 hens for the past ten years, and has fed from hoppers most of the time, being well satisfied that hens will eat and waste less, as well as thrive better, than by the broadcast system of feeding.

CAPONIZING.—The *Pacific Rural Press* says that capons are sold readily at high prices to the first-class French restaurants in San Francisco. Caponizing instruments are now made so that a person can soon learn to operate, and as the fowl can be lost only by bleeding to death, it is as good, in case of death by the operation, for table or market as if killed in the ordinary way.

FATTENING FOWLS IN TWO WEEKS.—A writer in the *London Field* states that poultry properly fed will acquire all the fatness needed for marketing purposes in a fortnight or three weeks at most. Their diet should be Indian, oat or barley meal, scalded in milk or water—the former is the best, as it will expedite the fattening process. They should be fed early in the morning, at noon, and also in the evening just before going to roost, and given a plentiful supply of pure fresh water, plenty of gravel, sliced cabbage or turnip tops. If the fowls are required to be very fat, some trimmings of fresh mutton suet may be chopped up and scalded with their other feed, or they may be boiled in milk alone and poured over the meal. This renders the flesh firmer than it otherwise would be. When fit to kill, feeding should be stopped for twelve hours or more so that the intestines may become comparatively empty.

The Apiary.

Bee-Keeping Not Easy for Women and Children.

L. C. Root, at a recent farmers' discussion at Utica, N. Y., is reported as saying: "There are two bee magazines which claim that bee keeping is good business for old women and children, because it is so easy. This is a mistake. The work is very difficult when the bees are kept in large numbers. It is necessary, to do well in bee keeping, to have good stocks. Some swarms are cheaper at \$25 than others are at \$1. A large force will do a large amount of work. You can tell when a hive is strong by lifting it up, and when a layer of bees appears on the bottom board it is a good swarm. Go around in the spring, and see that every hive has a queen. Then, to increase brood, move the frames away from the centre and put in new comb, and the queen will fill the centre. This must not be done too fast, for the cluster must be large enough to warm the hive. While this is going on, bees may have to be fed. Great care must be taken to secure enough available food. The great point in securing surplus is preventing swarming. I watch every hive. The queen's wings are always clipped. When the swarms come out, we go and pick up the queen and cage her, then open the hive and cut out all queen cells and remove one or two brood combs and put in empty frames. We must take out just enough to counteract the desire to swarm. I think there is a class of bees in a hive not old enough to get honey, and are idle. These may be employed by letting them make comb. To reach greatest profit, I believe every apiarian should make both box and extracted honey. These young bees will make comb if empty frames are supplied, which may be used as guide combs in boxes."

ENOUGH OF PATENT HIVES.—Mr. Clark has devoted much time for the past ten years to the honey bee and its ways, and has, as he says, "fooled" with a good many kinds of patent hives with which he has become disgusted and has abandoned, and which any one may have for oven wood if they will haul them out of his yard. After this experience he has settled down upon a simple hive of his own make as the best one he has ever seen; and his opinion in this matter coincides with that of every sensible bee keeper with whom we ever talked, that the simplest hive is the best, and that the nearest and most satisfactory approach to this is a square box which a swarm of bees will fill. The hive which Mr. Clark now uses is 12 inches square by 14 inches deep inside, provided with an excellent feeding arrangement, ample means for ventilation, and three hollow bars in the centre of the box, through which the bees can pass and repass at pleasure. He winters his bees out of doors, the hives being on a bench six or eight inches from the ground, over which is placed a box four or five inches larger than the hive, and one foot higher; the top space above the hive being crowded full of straw. The top of the outside box is made water-tight. In the spring this straw will be found all rotten, but the comb in the hive will be white and clean.—*Maine Farmer*.

SEASONABLE HINTS.—Through the month of January the bees require no care in the cellar house. They only ask to be in darkness and quiet. If they are on their summer stands, and have quilts or carpets over their frames, they will not suffer, though the entrances are blocked with snow. It is well, however, to see that the entrance, during a thaw, does not become stopped with water and dead bees, which a sudden cold wind may convert into ice. While you have nothing to do for the bees directly in this month, it is the time to plan for another season's work, and prepare your hives and honey-boxes. We hope the experience which some of you have had will not be repeated this winter, viz., your bees die at such a rate that you will need no new hives. If you have been careful, we are sure you will not.—*American Bee Journal*.