

"higglers," who are employed by the chicken-fatters to go about the country collecting the birds, and who pay so much per head for them. Prices vary considerably at different seasons of the year. In the early spring, during March and April, as much as 3s. 9d. and 4s. each is paid for January-hatched chicks. After that time the prices gradually fall about 3d. per week, till in June and July the minimum of 1s. and 9d. is reached. The collection of the chickens is sometimes made from long distances, frequently fifteen or twenty miles, the higglers finding that they can get them cheaper than nearer home. The higglers do not care to purchase unless the birds are of good size, and from constant practice they will pick out the heaviest and best young ones at a glance. Being bound to supply the "fatters" with a certain number periodically they are generally well informed as to likely places for making their purchases, and only when hard pressed for numbers and having heavy orders from the fatters will they take the smaller chickens. When the purchase of the birds by the higglers is accomplished they are handed over to the tender mercies of the poultry farmers, or as they are called in Sussex, "fatters," and the concluding process in order to fit the chickens for market is commenced.

The number of chickens prepared by some of the largest fatters is almost incredible. Mr. Oliver, known as the "king of the fatters," sends up as many as one hundred dozen head a week to London during the season. They are all consigned to Leadenhall Market, where Mr. Oliver bears such a reputation as a successful feeder, owing to the splendid condition in which his birds are sent up, that poultry from his farm realise the highest prices. Mr. Henry Crouch, of Brightling, also prepares an enormous number, and a visit to his farm will give a good idea of the method generally adopted. The chickens are housed in long narrow sheds, the coops with open-railed front and bottom ranging down each side, about five chickens in each coop. The pens are raised about three feet from the ground, dry earth being spread underneath, so that cleanliness is easily and quickly attained, an attendant with a hoe performing this part of the business daily. Although there are from twelve to fifteen hundred fowls in each shed there is no unpleasant smell even in the warmest weather.

When first received the chickens are about three months old, and the duration of their "education" varies according to the time of year. In May, for instance, they fatten quickly, and are ripe in about fourteen days, but in the autumn they take about three weeks before they are ready for the market. For the first week they are fed on skim milk and crushed oats mixed into a semi-fluid state, then for

some days with the same food with suet added—up to this period being fed from a trough—and finally they are forced for a few days with the same diet. The forcing process is done with a machine, cylindrical in shape, to which is attached an elastic tube with a nozzle. The chicken is held by a lad, who inserts the nozzle into its throat, whilst another boy turns a handle, which has the effect of forcing the food from the body of the machine into the crop of the bird. When the lad holding the fowl feels the crop sufficiently distended he says "Hold" (or in the Sussex vernacular, "holt"), the nozzle is removed, and the bird returned to his coop, where he quietly digests his dinner till the next meal is ready.

The mode of killing generally adopted is by wringing the neck, and when dead the chickens are plucked and sent up to market. Eggs are rarely to be bought in the neighborhood, as they are kept solely for hatching purposes. We did not hear of any incubator being used, as there appears to be no large chicken hatchers, the supply being obtained from all the small cottages principally, the hen doing the incubation without artificial assistance. We should imagine that it would be an interesting amusement, and an exceedingly paying one, for some of the local gentry, whose stock of chickens is frequently requisitioned by the higglers, to turn their attention to artificial hatching. Incubators are now made in such perfection, and are so easily worked, that they are no longer the experimental toys of a few years ago.

We were surprised to see so very little variety in the style of fowl, Light Brahma and Dorking being responsible for the parentage of the majority. The French-bred birds were few and far between, though we should think the Houdan-Dorking and Creve Cœur-Langshan would make splendid birds for the purpose, as they grow to a large size, mature quickly, and are covered with a quantity of white meat. With such a ready sale for chickens this neighborhood ought to be the one for poultry farming to succeed in; and if the fatters make such a good business of it, it may reasonably be assumed that hatching on a large scale would be tolerably remunerative, especially with the assistance of incubators.—*Land and Water.*

Fanciers.

Editor Review.

We often think, especially when at our poultry shows, or rather shows where poultry is exhibited, of the vast amount of abuse heaped upon the word *fancier*. As the word is generally used it is supposed to mean, as we understand it, a person engaged in keeping or breeding pure-bred stock. But this is a corruption of the true meaning of the word. For instance, the man that buys and bor-