

POULTRY.

A Visit to English Poultry Farms.

[BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.]

In England special attention is now given to birds of practical utility for table and eggs. The best, plumpest, and hardiest chickens come from a cross between Indian Game and Dorking or Surrey and Sussex fowls. These chickens have considerable meat on the breast and little offal, but with a tendency to yellow skin, and this the breeder has to overcome by carefully selecting his breeding stock so that white-skinned and white-legged birds may be reared. White Cochins and Brahma bred fowls should be avoided, as they are poor in breast, coarse in bone, and feathered on the legs. Plymouth Rocks and Wyandottes make excellent table fowls, especially the latter, which have a fair amount of meat on legs and breast. But the

GAME-DORKING CROSS "TAKES THE CAKE"

as the fowl for market, as they are plump and compact in form, with plenty of good breast meat and little offal. Therefore, if good results are to follow poultry-fattening, care must be taken in the initial stages "to produce birds that are plump and white in flesh, with white legs without any feathers on them," as they find a ready sale. These lines English breeders are being encouraged to follow, and at the recent Dairy Show it was evident many had learnt the lesson. Some excellent table fowl were exhibited—white in flesh, plump and compact in form, with well-formed, meaty breasts, small in bone, and without much offal.

Some time ago we drove round the famous poultry-fattening yards of Aylesbury & Hemel, Hampstead, in Buckinghamshire and Hertford, and subsequently in the picturesque Sussex village of Heathfield, near Ticehurst and Code Street. In 1897 about 1,765 tons of dead poultry were despatched from Heathfield to London, independent of large consignments to customers on the south coast. Fifty-two tons were despatched in one week, representing 29,000 birds, being the largest output of the season. But the birds are not bred in Heathfield, they are only fattened. These fatteners have no time to attend setting hens or rearing chickens. This is done for them. The majority of the fowls crammed are reared in the Emerald Isle, which possesses the best climate and pastures in the world for the purpose. Great numbers are sent in crates at a low freight, and these fowls are soon fed according to the Sussex method. But some large farmers have a staff of men who do little else than scour the country for miles round and buy up any likely birds, while cottagers in every village readily lend a hand in rearing fowls for the use of the fatterer. I have seen coops containing young chickens placed on the green patch by the side of the Queen's highway and in cosy corners in some out-of-the-way lane if the villager has no allotment or small garden attached to his cottage. At Heathfield the birds are turned out

FAT IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS' TIME.

The food is pumped into them in the consistency of porridge, which is composed of ground oats, sour milk and fat, mixed together. Upon one farm as many as 2,000 fowls were crammed by three men in three hours, and the dexterity exhibited by these fatters is only attained by long practice. Killing is an art, and instantaneous. A fowl is caught and the man holds it firmly by the neck in one hand and by the legs in the other. By extending the bird its full length, the neck given a sudden jerk, and it was ready for the picker, who can pluck forty birds an hour. The feathers, except plumes and quills, are utilized by upholsterers for beds and pillows. Special vans for the conveyance of table poultry have been provided by the railway company, as the traffic has increased since May last by "leaps and bounds." These remarks will suffice for the Heathfield district of poultry fatteners, as I am wishful to describe

ANOTHER FATTENING ESTABLISHMENT,

situated on the famous "Northern Heights of London," celebrated by the late Wm. Howitt.

Highgate is in North London, and famed in ancient story as the halting place of Dick Whittington, the legendary owner of a famous cat. A stone marks the spot where Whittington sat down and heard the bells of Bow church (which is in the heart of the City of London) pealing, as it were, the legend, "Turn again, Whittington, thrice Mayor of London." And half an hour's walk from this historic spot lies the Manor Park Farm, which comprises 700 acres of clay land. For rearing poultry on a large scale a clay soil is a great disadvantage, as hens grow fat and cocks get thin. The soil ought to be light and gravelly, so that the moisture can easily drain away. This farm is on the left of the Great North Road on the way to York, and is enclosed within a neat railing, and behind are green pastures as far as the eye can reach—a beautiful landscape of several miles, reaching to the famous Harrow-on-the-Hill. The farmhouse and dairy are almost hidden by fine oak trees, which give a picturesque appearance to the dwell-

ing. Manor Farm Dairy is owned by Mr. John Lane and his two sons. Mr. William Lane looks after the farm proper, and Mr. Ernest devotes his time and energies to dairying and poultry-keeping. The farm land is undulating, and all well sheltered from wind and rain by oak trees and carefully trimmed hedges of holly, hawthorn, and privet, which protect the chickens.

The fattening department is a separate and enclosed institution, about eighty feet square. On three sides are double tiers of fattening pens, which are about thirty inches from the concrete floor. The fronts of the pens are iron bars, and the bottoms are wooden spars three-quarters inch apart, and the droppings fall on the floor. In front there is a long wooden gutter, in which the food is placed before the birds are turned into the cramming room, and these troughs are turned outwards when not in use. There is accommodation for dealing with 1,000 birds, but only 500 were in process of fattening when we visited the farm. On one side is the food room, where Sussex ground oats, sour milk and fat are mixed into the consistency of porridge. Next door is the plucking and trussing room, and here an experienced poulterer teaches students the art of preparing fowls for the London market or for private customers. The cramming room is a large apartment, with tier upon tier of pens filled with birds for fattening. Close by is a small house and run for fowls off their feed, and near it is a duck-fattening house and confined run, as ducks are not crammed by the machine. About the center of the yard is a wooden house, which at one time was the incubator room, but it has now been fitted up for shaping and pressing birds for the London market. This method was introduced by Mr. C. E. Brooke, ex-master of the Poulterers' Company, one of the guilds of the City of London. The master and wardens encourage the exhibition of table poultry by offering gold and silver medals for proficiency, and a practical poulterer gives demonstrations of his art and skill each day of the Dairy Show, and also at the great meeting of the Smithfield Club in December.

The process of fattening occupies four weeks at Highgate—two weeks outside in pens, the food being run into troughs, and two weeks in the cramming room. Few pure-bred birds are used for table except Dorkings, Indian Game, Houdans, Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Sussex, Surrey and Langshans. The Rocks are regarded as one of the best all-round breeds, either for confinement or liberty, and their table qualities are very good. Wyandottes are grand all-round birds, grow fairly fast, and make good table birds; in fact, they are firm favorites with fancier and farmer. The Langshan is a useful bird, both for eggs and table. The skin is white, but the flesh is not so juicy as that of Game, but for all that we have had excellent results with the breeds enumerated. The Indian Game-Dorking cross is the fowl which Messrs. Lane Brothers have brought to perfection, and with which they have won prizes at all the principal shows in the United Kingdom. There are crosses in which other fatteners excel, such as the Brahma-Dorking, Indian Game and Faverolle, Rock and Orpington, Indian Game and Sussex or Surrey, Old English Game and Dorking, Indian Game and Langshan or Rock or Orpington; and these varieties were in the prize list at the recent London Dairy Show. Of course, in a large farm "the wasters" (not up to standard) are all fattened for table; but generally speaking, cross-bred birds are more profitable at market. Mr. Dyer believes that it is best to fatten after the birds are four months old if the season is at all favorable, and in this respect the clay soil at Highgate somewhat retards operations.

Birds are selected from the numerous runs and houses, in addition to those cross-bred birds set apart for fattening. The birds are placed in an improved Sussex fattening-coop with four compartments, capable of holding five or six birds. Iron bars are used instead of wood, and on that account there is little or nothing about the coops to harbor insects. The fowls remain two weeks outside in the range of coops fixed for the purpose, then the remaining fortnight they are transferred to the cramming room to be finished off. Hearson's Crammer is the machine used. The fatter has to feel the crops of the birds daily to see that they have their proper allowance. The plan adopted here (as in Heathfield, Snonley, and Aylesbury) is for the attendant to take the bird from a pen and place it properly under his left arm, and with the other guide the tube down its throat on its passage to the crop. The food in the dish on the top of the machine is then pumped into the bird, and as soon as the crop is filled it is replaced in its pen, and so on till all the birds are fed. This process is repeated twice a day, and sometimes a fatter can feed fifty birds an hour, and with the assistance of a boy sixty have been crammed. Elsewhere crammers can feed four times that number. When the four weeks have run out, those fit for killing are handed over to the poulterer and his pupils. Pekin ducks are also fed and fattened for table, and on the Upper Farm and its pond we saw quite a host of plump water fowl.

Messrs. Lane have many varieties of pure-bred fowls, namely: Minorcas, Light Brahmas, Indian Games, Rocks, White and Blue Leghorns, and Gold and Silver Wyandottes. The houses and runs are admirably kept, and Dyer was arranging the breeding pens for the season. He had dubbed

(to trim the wattles and comb) several birds, as the chickens were more hardy and strong. The cross-bred chickens have full liberty, and they scour field after field. Shelters on wheels are dotted here and there all over the farm. The Upper Farm is situated upon a hillock, and here there is a large cow shed, which is now utilized as a fowl house, and one of the outhouses is devoted to coops for setting hens. In the old cow house over 500 fowls have a roosting place in the loft, and for their convenience a ladder was at hand. All the houses and runs were visited, and many head of fowl passed in review—old and prospective winners. But Dyer does not entirely depend upon setting hens. He has fitted up a new incubator room, which has been filled with straw and double-boarded on sides and roof, so as to retain all the heat possible. When in full working order there will be a 200-egg Hearson, 100-egg Hearson, 100-egg Tomlinson, and one of Greenwood's. The rearers used are Wethneria, the Coxy Coop, Hearson, and several of Greenwood's. Hitherto Lane Brothers have been very successful with their machines, and in consequence of the large demand they have for eggs for setting and table, as well as pure-bred birds for exhibition, they have just been compelled to add two incubators to their new room. The aim at Manor Farm is to make poultry-keeping pay, and from all appearances that object has been attained. In connection with the dairy a large herd of cows is kept, and the home supply is supplemented by drafts from provincial dairy farms in order to meet the demand of the suburban branches of John Lane & Sons. W. O. London, Eng.

Picking and Packing Fowls.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

SIR,—It has been with much interest that I have read Mr. Gilbert's able articles on poultry. He has very forcibly brought forth the money-producing power of the hen in his report of 1897. After reading his method of fattening fowls, I thought perhaps your readers might be glad to know how to dress and ship poultry to our large cities. The following method has proved successful in shipping to Montreal, Boston and New York (all shipments were from Belleville): After being fattened in small yards for ten days to two weeks the fowls were fasted at least 18 hours. When ready to kill, take the bird and place the wings firmly between the knees; the body thus will be put forward; then with the left hand open the mouth and with a sharp knife make a deep incision in the roof of the mouth, immediately below the eyes; also cut the juglar by sticking just behind the ears. Commence picking (dry) at once; clean the breast and crop first, as experience has led us to believe this portion tears very easily if allowed to cool. Pull the feather the opposite way to their natural position; pick quickly, but take care not to tear the flesh. After a little experience you will not care to scald chickens for your own use, as you can have them picked before the water is scalding hot. Leave half the feathers on the neck and the outer wing point unpicked; some leave the tail feathers. After picking, wash the head clean in two waters, then hang up to cool, head downwards. Allow to cool for at least eight hours, or until the body becomes perfectly cold. Pack in boxes or barrels and cover the top with a clean piece of old linen; this covering prevents the express agent from handling the boxes roughly and also admits free circulation of air. If the lid is of boards, unless the poultry is packed tightly the expressmen will do their utmost to make jelly or some other compound of the contents of the boxes. This method will admit anyone of receiving 10 cents per pound for good chickens weighing from nine to ten pounds to the pair, but they must be fat. Do not mix fowls with light and yellow flesh in the same box, as they are unsightly and customers seldom want both colors. The feeding of yellow corn has a tendency to make the flesh a deeper yellow. W. R. GRAHAM. Hastings Co., Ont.

Rate of Growth of Ducklings.

An experiment recently conducted at Ham-monton, New Jersey, went to show that ducklings, if properly fed and managed, should make the following gains in weight per week:

	LB.	OZ.
Weight at one week old.....	0	4
" two weeks old.....	0	9
" three weeks old.....	1	0
" four weeks old.....	1	9
" five weeks old.....	2	2
" six weeks old.....	2	11
" seven weeks old.....	3	5
" eight weeks old.....	4	0
" nine weeks old.....	4	8

Death of a Pioneer.

Mr. Andrew F. Pettit, at the age of 90 years, died last month at the residence of his only son, Mr. W. G. Pettit, of Freeman, Ont. He was born in 1808, and in 1883 moved to the farm on which he died. When he took possession, the farm was covered with the primeval forest, which Mr. Pettit himself cleared. He was a man of quiet and retiring disposition, preferring the retirement of domestic life to public activities and honors, and was a loyal British subject, having held the rank of lieutenant in the militia during the rebellion of 1837. He was the last surviving member of a family of six, and one son and one daughter survive him.