

Then the cry is, "We cannot get eggs during the winter." Can the owner expect eggs at such a time of the year when he keeps his fowls under such conditions? I had many invitations to visit various Poultry keepers' yards in Birmingham and the outskirts this season, but it was very few I was able to visit. I mention this because some seemed disappointed when I told them I really could not visit them. They told me that they had read in *Poultry* that I visited so many places in other districts, and wanted to know why I could not do so at Birmingham, but I have little time for visiting except in those districts I am staying in for the purpose. I have over ninety lectures booked up to the present, and I may say for the benefit of the readers of the *Poultry* that the districts I am lecturing in will usually be reported in this paper, and if poultry friends will make arrangements at the lectures I shall only be too pleased to pay them a visit. Cheshire will be my principal centre this season. I have sixty lectures booked for that county and thirty for Lancashire. Several people at Birmingham told me they were quite willing to pay my fee if I would only visit them, but it is a pleasure to me to give advice on Poultry matters, free from any charge whatever when I am out lecturing as long as time permits. Returning to the Birmingham Show, it was better attended this year than ever, though the numbers fell off a little on the last day, as it was wet. Taking it on the whole, the birds stood the seven days in the Show very well, but, of course, where there are so many there are sure to be a few go wrong a little. Whenever birds have been away on a long journey for a few days, it is well when they arrive home to give a little Epsom salts, which clears the blood. No doubt one reason why they go a little queer at three or four-days shows is because when the gas is turned on and there is a large number of people the place becomes very hot, then after all are out and gas turned off the place gets very cold. It would be well for the birds if there was not quite so much ventilation during the night, after the place being so hot in the evening. The sudden change is too much for them. It is more particularly noticeable in shows where the buildings are low. I find there is nothing better for keeping fowls in good condition while in the show pen than apples. When I am at large shows I usually chop up apples for my birds. Mrs. Ricketts this year had a prize bird which would not eat. I suggested giving it some pieces of apple. This was done, and the bird was soon right. Apples act as a medicine and tonic. I mention this because many exhibitors buy cabbage or lettuce for their birds, but an apple answers better than any green stuff, unless it is watercress. There was a little grumbling at Birmingham Show as regards the awards, but that is a usual thing. It is difficult for the Judges to please every-

one, but there certainly were a few mistakes. It was rather dark on Saturday, which made judging awkward, especially in the lower pens.—*Poultry*.

### HOW TO KNOW A GOOD LAYER.

IT is not every one, even those who have considerable experience with fowl, who possess the knack of picking out good layers from a strange stock. But it can be done, and one who has kept fowls for many years describes the way in which it can be easily managed, as follows:—

There goes a hen with a thick neck, large head, ill shaped, walks listlessly about, seemingly with no intention or purpose in view. She doesn't care to scratch, but hangs around the hen house, evidently waiting for her next feed. She gets up late in the morning, and goes to bed early in the evening. The hen may be put down as a very poor layer. Here comes another hen. She walks briskly, and there is an elasticity in her movements that denotes she has something in view. She is neat and natty in appearance, small head, with slim neck, nicely arched or curved. She forages or scratches all day long, and may be too busy to come for her evening meal. She is at the door in the morning waiting to be let out. She snatches a few mouthfuls of food, and is off to the meadow, looking for insects. Before she gets out in the morning she generally deposits her daily egg in the nest, or returns after a short forage. By studying these traits, and acting on them, any person may, in a few years, succeed in building up a grand laying flock of birds.—*The Kennel, The Farm, The Poultry Yard*.

### HOUDANS AND THEIR ADAPTABILITY FOR CROSSING PURPOSES.

ACCORDING to Mr. Cook, there is no better breed to cross with cross breed hens than the Houdan. This is a French breed, which is, perhaps, better known through England, Ireland, and Scotland than any other French variety. The Houdan is a valuable fowl to the poultry keeper, especially for crossing. It has been used for this purpose much more than any other breed for some years past, and Mr. Cook has not found any other to surpass it for all-round crossing purposes, notwithstanding that it has its disadvantages both when pure and crossed.

The Houdan is a short thick set, plump fowl, broad in the chest, and short in the legs. The colour of the later is a pale slate—so pale that it is an easy matter to breed white-