

## GAPES—HOW TO AVOID, AND HOW TO CURE.

BY T. GASCOIGNE.

**T**HIS troublesome disease is confined to young chickens, and its cause is pretty well-known to be due to worms in the windpipe, which obstruct the air-passage, causing the little sufferers to be continually gaping to obtain breath—hence the name of the disease. Gapes is said to be most troublesome in very wet seasons, and on low-lying ground; although not altogether unknown in very dry seasons, and where the yards are high and dry. One would have thought in such a dry season as this, gapes would be almost unknown, yet only very recently, I have had several cases of gapes on ground where no chickens have been running for twelve months previous, but this really points more to what I have already said was chiefly, if not entirely, the cause of gapes in chickens. But, as your subject is one for the best means of avoiding chickens having the gapes, I must not depart from it by describing how those worms find their way into the chicken's windpipe, which causes them to have gapes; but I will describe the best means I have always found to avoid chickens from having the gapes. After twenty years' experience in rearing chickens, both artificially and under hens, I have come to the conclusion that chickens hatched under hens are far more liable to gapes than those hatched and reared artificially—in fact, I have never yet known chickens to suffer with gapes that had been hatched and reared altogether artificially. Some of your readers may say, "What has the hen that sits upon the eggs, got to do with those youngsters which hatch out having the gapes?" Well, perhaps it does seem a little from the subject; but to point out how, in my opinion, chickens can be avoided having the gapes, I must commence where the evil does, and that is with the hen, for, unless these are free from insect pests whilst sitting, depend upon it gapes amongst your chickens will be far more numerous than they would be, if such little matters as dusting the hens to free them from vermin, were attended to. Why is it that very early-hatched chickens seldom suffer with the gapes? Why, because insect life is not so numerous during the winter months, and the hens which are being used then for sitting are freer from insect pests. Some of your readers may have noticed large ticks upon the heads of some chickens almost as soon as they are hatched. (I do not mean lice, but large black-ticks, very much like the sheep louse.) Chickens infested with these pests, if left to take their chance, will, nine out of every ten, suffer with

the gapes. I have tried the plan of dusting one hen two or three times whilst sitting, with insect powder, leaving another one which I knew to be infested with vermin like the first, to take her chance, the consequence was, every chicken hatched under the latter had their heads covered with large ticks almost as soon as hatched, which must, of course, come off the hen, whilst not one of those hatched under the hen which had been dusted freely with insect powder had a single one upon them. The whole nine of those infested had gapes before they were three weeks' old; whilst not one of those hatched under the other hen showed signs of gapes.

Such cases must really lead one to believe that gapes can, to a great extent, be avoided by seeing that all hens which are intended to bring up chickens are quite free from vermin; when once gapes appear in a yard, immediate steps must be taken to prevent its spread; and nothing acts better for this than camphor, a lump of which should be constantly kept in their drinking-dish, which, of course, should always be kept quite clean—do not forget that cleanliness is the heart of success in chicken-rearing.

One other excellent thing to prevent the spread of almost any disease, is chopped, raw onions, mixed in their meal—only those who have used onions in rearing chickens know the great value of them. Now, as to the best method of curing those youngsters which have the gapes. I have not yet been able to find a medicine that could cure them. Medicines, in my opinion, have very little effect in destroying the worms—to know you get the worms out of their windpipes, is to see them, and the best way is to get a stiff feather, strip the down off to very near the point, dip it in Jeyes' fluid or turpentine; afterwards place it down the chicken's windpipe, and be sure it goes down the windpipe; after giving it two or three twists round, pull it up, and you will be almost sure to have brought out with the feather some, if not all, the worms; perhaps you may require a second feather. I have seen chickens that have been so treated, in a very short time afterwards, which could not even be noticed that they had had gapes at all. No time should be lost in this operation; it requires a little care or else the chicken will become choked; but if done properly it is a very effective cure. It is a much better plan than holding the heads of the chickens over the fumes of carbolic acid, to make them cough up the worms. Ground where chickens are constantly reared should be well covered with lime once or twice a year; and immediately a case of gapes has appeared, the chicken-coop or house should be well dusted with fresh lime.